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Stephen L. Herring

Divine Substitution

Humanity as the Manifestation of Deity in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East

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Abstract

Divine Substitution: Humanity as the Manifestation of Deity in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East, by Stephen L. Herring, is an investigation of ancient conceptualizations of divine presence. Specifically, this thesis investigates the possibility that the ancient Mesopotamian conceptualization of cultic and royal statues, thought to actually manifest the presence of gods and kings, can likewise be found in ancient Israel. Despite the overly pessimistic view of the later biblical authors, material objects were almost certainly believed to extend and manifest the presence of God in pre-exilic Israel. Likewise, the later polemics against such cultic concepts demonstrate Israel's familiarity with this type of conceptualization. These polemics engaged in the rhetoric of mutilation and destruction of cultic representations, the erasure and re-inscription of divine names, and the rhetorical deconstruction of the specific Mesopotamian rituals thought to transform the dead statue into a living god. Though the biblical reflection of these concepts is more often found in the negative commentary regarding "foreign" cultic practices, S. Herring demonstrates that these opinions were not universally held. At least three biblical texts (Gen 1:26 f.; Ex 34:29 – 34; and Ezek 36 – 37) portray the conceptualization that material images could manifest the divine presence in positive terms. Yet, these positive attestations were limited to a certain type of material image – humans.

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August 13, 2013 Stephen L. Herring

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1. Introduction: Representation and the Real

1.1 Summary and Outline

"On the day when the god was created…"
(STT 200, line 2)

Thus begins the seventh century BCE Sultantepe Tablet used on the second day of the Mesopotamian *mīs pî*, or "Mouth Washing," ritual. The initial statement does not refer to the absolute creation of the god, but the transformation of a cultic statue into the god on earth. This text is but one of a multitude of ancient examples that point toward a significant difference between the ancient Mesopotamian understanding of representation and our own modern assumptions, which typically hold that representation and reality are logically and ontologically distinct. This thesis investigates the possibility that the Mesopotamian understanding of representation is likewise attested and, more importantly, condoned in the Hebrew Bible. The first step in this process involves looking at the concept of representation in Mesopotamia, be it cultic or royal (Chapter 2). We will then turn to ancient Israel and examine those texts that portray this type of cultic dependence on divine representation negatively (Chapter 3). Here, we will attempt to argue that the ancient Israelite cult was dependent on cultic representations and that even the later polemics and parodies betray a thorough knowledge of the cultic conceptual system of Mesopotamia and a willing participation in the rhetoric typical of iconic cults. The final section consists of a reinvestigation of three well-known texts in the light of our previous conclusions on the role of representation in Mesopotamia and the negative reflection of this concept in Israel (Chapter 4). These three texts share one defining characteristic: They appear to equate, in some way, living humans with Israel's god by means of a comparison to cultic images. Although the presence of the cultic image analogy in these texts has been observed before, the possibility that these

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texts reflect a conceptualization of divine representation found in ancient Mesopotamia has been neglected.

1.2 Cultic Images and Semiotics in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies

The absence of such an attempt is somewhat surprising given the recent recognition, in both biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies, that there exists a great divide between the ancient Near Eastern understanding of representation and our own, which, traditionally speaking, depends so heavily on a Platonic view of representation as *mimesis*. In recognition of this fact, some recent investigations have applied various postmodern philosophical theories to the ancient conceptualization of divine images in an attempt to explain their understanding more fully. Generally speaking, these systems have an advantage over past attempts, since they place a much greater emphasis on the role of interpretation.

In biblical studies, the semiotic system of C. S. Peirce has, perhaps, been the most influential in recent years.[1] Peirce defines a "sign" as anything that,

> …stands *for* something *to* the idea which it produces, or modifies. Or it is a vehicle conveying into the mind something from without. That for which it stands is called its *object*; that for which it conveys *meaning*, and the idea to which it gives rise, its *interpretant*.[2]

Simply put, for Peirce, a sign is anything that functions like one, i. e. anything that "gives rise" to an interpretant (the "sign-in-the-mind" of the viewer).[3] What has drawn the most attention from scholars of the Bible and the ancient Near East, however, is Peirce's classification of signs based on the way in which they

1 See, e. g., M. Halbertal and A. Margalit, *Idolatry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1992); C. D. Evans, "Cult Images, Royal Policies and the Origins of Aniconism," in *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström* (eds. W. S. Holloway and L. K. Handy; JSOT 190; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 192 – 212; T. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (CBOTS 42; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995), esp. 20 – 22.

2 C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (eds. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1931 – 58), 1:339 [italics his].

3 Peirce held to three basic elements in his semiotic system: 1) "sign" (the material representation); 2) "object" (what is represented by the "sign"), and; 3) "interpretant" (the idea/interpretation caused by the 'sign'). According to D. Greenlee, Pierce's interpretant is "any sign which interprets another sign, whether that interpreting sign be a thought in somebody's mind, a written translation, a sentence spoken, or anything else that is interpretive" (*Peirce's Concept of Sign* [The Hague: Mouton, 1973], 26).

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denote what they represent (i. e. the sign's object).[4] In his numerous notations on signs,[5] Peirce distinguishes three ways in which a sign can stand for its object: 1) the "symbol," according to Peirce, is a sign that "would lose the character which renders it a sign if there was no interpretant."[6] Or, again, a symbol denotes its "object" by means of an association of general ideas.[7] Thus, the symbolic relationship between sign and object rests upon conventionality or arbitrariness, regulated by culture; 2) the "icon" is a weakly motivated or unmotivated type of sign. It is "a sign that conveys an idea by virtue of its very close reproduction of the actual object or event."[8] Whether natural or cultural, some resemblance between the sign and its object is important for the interpretation; and 3) the "index" is "a sign which would, at once, lose the character which makes it a sign if its object were removed, but would not lose that character if there were no interpretant."[9] The index is an unmotivated sign. The indexical relationship between a sign and its object is "established through experience or pragmatic understanding of the material world."[10] For example, the presence of smoke is an indexical sign of fire and the presence of wet streets is an indexical sign of rain. Thus, Pierce's three-fold classification includes not only motivated, culturally conceived signs (symbol and, to a lesser extent, icon), but also unmotivated signification (index and, to a lesser extent, icon).[11] Further, since all signs are

4 Peirce discusses many different sign typologies in his writings. Best known, however, are his three interlocking categories based upon his own phenomenological categories: 1) quality of feeling; 2) reaction/resistance and; 3) representation/mediation. The first sign typology is based on the phenomenological category of the sign itself (e. g., qualisign, sinsign, legisign), the second on the way the sign denotes its object (icon, index, symbol), and the third on how the sign stands for its object to its interpretant (rheme, dicisign, argument). See, C. S. Peirce, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings* (eds. N. Houser et al.; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1992 – 98), 2:289 – 99.

5 One of the chief difficulties in using Peirce, according to Greenlee, is that his numerous attempts to define what it means to be a sign are scattered about his published and unpublished papers and that, further, "he nowhere in his writings offers a single complete analysis of the general principles of signification." Nevertheless, "all of the different definitions consistently maintain one position on the essential principles or conditions of the theory…that signification require an object functioning significantly, that this object represent another object, and that it 'determine' an interpretant" (23).

6 C. S. Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (ed. J. Buchler; New York: Dover, 1955), 104, cf. pp. 112 – 5.

7 Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 2:249; cf. Greenlee, 93.

8 M. Gottdiener, *Postmodern Semiotics: Material Culture and the Forms of Postmodern Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 12; cf. Peirce, *Philosophical Writings*, 104 – 7.

9 Peirce, *Philosophical Writings*, 104.

10 Gottdiener, 12.

11 In contrast to F. Saussure, who refers only to the "arbitrary" or "unmotivated" relationship between the signifier and the signified (i. e. Peirce's "symbol").

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interpreted by another idea (i. e. the interpretant), which is itself a sign, meaning is always "a volatile process of interpretation."[12]

In one recent study, T. N. D. Mettinger uses Peirce's system to clarify the differences between iconic and aniconic representations of deity.[13] He determines that aniconic representations are either examples of indices or "conventions" ("symbol" in Peircian terminology), while iconic representations are, unsurprisingly, examples of icons.[14] However, given that Peirce's classification of signs into symbols, icons, or indices remains based on the level of proximity between the sign and the reality that it attempts to represent, it is not all that useful when applied to a system that appears to reject the binary opposition of representation and real. As we shall see, in many cases, the referential relationships dictated by such definitions do not seem ultimately to matter. Mettinger admits as much when he recognizes that, in Mesopotamia, both iconic and aniconic representations appear to function conceptually in the same way and produce the same results.[15] While Peirce's system may aid us in understanding how the form of the representation relates to the entity represented, we should not make the mistake of drawing the conclusion that this relationship naturally dictates how the representation functioned.[16] As we shall see, in many cases there appears to be very little that separates the different forms of cultic representation in ancient Mesopotamia. Be it cultic statue, standing stone, or even cultic symbol, the divide between the representation and the real is often not apparent.[17]

12 Gottdiener, 14. This Peircian concept was taken up by later semioticians under different labels, e. g., "polysemy," "multivocality," etc. Some argue that Peirce's "interpretant" is comparable to J. Derrida's "différance" (see, e. g., C. Atkins, *Reading Deconstruction, Deconstructive Reading* [Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1983], 81), which is based on Saussure's theory that a sign has meaning only in relation to other signs (i. e. in opposition). J. Sheriff, however, argues that it is not the "interpretant" that is comparable to Derrida's use of "différance," but the "*ground* of representamen." Peirce's "ground" is, in effect, the context or system in which the sign is being interpreted (*The Fate of Meaning: Charles Peirce, Structuralism, and Literature* [Princeton: Princeton University, 1989], 56 – 57 and n.3).

13 Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 21 f. Peirce's system has been applied most often to the discussion on the Israelite rationale for the prohibition against similarity-based representations (e. g., see, Halbertal, 38 f.; cf. T. Lewis, "Syro-Palestinian Iconography and Divine Images," in *Cult Image and Divine Representation in the Ancient Near East* [ed. N. H. Walls; ASOR 10; Boston: ASOR, 2005],71 n.7).

14 Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 21.

15 Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 47.

16 Cf. Mettinger's warning that the presence of aniconic representation should not lead us to conclusions about the theological implications of an aniconic stance by taking "*aniconic iconography* as an immediate expression of some *aniconic theology*" (*No Graven Image*, 22 [italics his].

17 This distinction and its helpfulness for determining the ancient conceptualization of representation will be taken up in more detail in Chapter 3.

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Due to this last point scholars, such as A. Berlejung,[18] apply H.-G. Gadamer's understanding of the difference between an "image" (*Bild*) and a "copy" (*Abbild*) to the ancient Near Eastern concept of cultic images. According to Gadamer, the function of a copy is solely to point to the original (*Urbild*). Thus, the copy will resemble its original and will be cancelled out upon achieving that goal. It is a means to an end and, like all means, loses its function when it reaches its goal.[19] This is not the case for the image:

> Was dagegen ein Bild ist, hat seine Bestimmung überhaupt nicht in seiner Selbstaufhebung. Denn es ist nicht ein Mittel zum Zweck. Hier ist das Bild selber das Gemeinte…Die Darstellung bleibt vielmehr mit dem Dargestellten wesenhaft verbunden, ja, gehört zu ihm hinzu.[20]

The primary characteristic of the image, then, is not the physical resemblance, but the ontological inseparability ("ontologische Unlösbarkeit")[21] that exists between the image and what is represented. For Gadamer, this is nowhere as obvious as in a religious image, since "[a]n ihm wird zweifelsfrei klar, daß das Bild nicht Abbild eines abgebildeten Seins ist, sondern mit dem Abgebildeten seinsmäßig kommuniziert."[22]

The ontological relationship that exists between the image and the original results in an increase in being for the thing represented; the image is equated to an "emanation" or "overflow" of the represented entity.[23] In this sense the image, for Gadamer, is to be distinguished from the "symbol" (*Symbol*), which also functions to make present that which it represents. Symbols, unlike images, are merely representatives ("bloße Stellvertreter") in that they must be known if one is to understand what they indicate.[24] The symbol, then, is important only in so far as one understands what it is representing. The image, on the other hand, has

18 *Die Theologie der Bilder: Herstellung und Einweihung von Kultbildern in Mesopotamien und die alttestamentliche Bilderpolemik* (OBO 162; Freiburg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 6–8.

19 H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965), 132.

20 "An image, however, is not destined to nullify itself, since it is not a means to an end. Here, the image itself is what is meant…Rather, the representation remains essentially connected with what is represented, indeed, it is part of it (Gadamer, 132).

21 Gadamer, 133.

22 "[i]n it it is clear without any doubt that the image is not a copy of a copied being, but ontologically communicates with what is copied" (Gadamer, 136).

23 Gadamer, 134.

24 Gadamer, 147. In this way, the symbol is like a "sign" (*Zeichen*) in Gadamer's philosophy. The sign functions only to point away from itself to that which is represented. The obvious distinction between the image and the sign, therefore, is similar to the difference between the image and the copy – in viewing the image, the viewer has already reached the original and so there is no need to be pointed elsewhere (Gadamer, 134).

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significance in and of itself, apart from the represented person or thing. In this way, the image has "im ästhetischen Sinne des Wortes ein eigenes Sein."[25]

As we shall see, the ancient Mesopotamian conceptualization of representation is very much like Gadamer's *Bild*, where the real presence of the entity represented participates in the representation and, thus, the representation has its own being. In Mesopotamia, the ontological life of the image is not only aesthetic. Indeed, the distinction between what is "real" and what is "representation" becomes blurred, so that the image is, itself, treated as a living thing.

To date, the most comprehensive attempt to understand the ancient Mesopotamian conception is Z. Bahrani's *The Graven Image*.[26] Bahrani does not limit her investigation to cultic images. Instead, she attempts to explain the entire system, including the cuneiform system of writing, as well as royal and divine representation (whether living or statue) by recourse to a number of postmodern philosophical theories. Bahrani begins her study on representation by applying theories of deferred and pluridimensional referentiality to the Babylonian cuneiform script. She argues that the relationship between sign and signified in the cuneiform script "was not unidirectional in the thinking of the Mesopotamians…(but) is perhaps better conceived, metaphorically, in terms of a circle or a chain of signification."[27] In other words, for the ancient Mesopotamians, one could encounter the same concept, thing or referent through different signifiers. Her argument is based on the seemingly "unlimited possibilities for signification" inherent in cuneiform script, where any one sign (or combination of signs) could evoke a number of different meanings. They could, for instance, be read for their pictorial quality, either directly or, more often, *pars pro toto* (i. e. metonymically or synecdochically). Such "pictograms" could also be used in isolation or in combination to indicate other meanings by association (i. e. metonymically or metaphorically).[28] Finally, these same signs could be read for their phonetic value (i. e. homophonically) to evoke even different referents. The multiple possibilities inherent in any one sign helps explain the Mesopotamian hermeneutics of omen and dream interpretation, where all the possible relationships between sign and signified were employed. The scholars responsible for interpreting these messages from the gods explored the entire range of relationships between sign and signified (homophony, metonymy,

25 "in the aesthetic sense of the word, its own being" (Gadamer, 133).

26 *The Graven Image: Representation in Babylonia and Assyria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2003).

27 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 111.

28 E.g., a picture of a foot could refer to walking, a picture of a triangle could metonymically refer to a woman or girl, or a line drawing of a mountain could refer to a foreign land. Likewise, one could combine the later two examples to indicate a slave girl (Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 112).

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synecdoche, metaphorical, iconicity, etc.).[29] The idea that one could encounter the same things or phenomena through multiple signs is related to the system of divination – the belief that the gods had written messages into creation.[30] Thus, everything, from normal occurrences to unusual events to dreams, could be "read" in an attempt to retrieve some divine message. Any sign (written or otherwise), therefore, could be interpreted based upon resemblance ("including areas of iconicity and homophony") and association ("including metonymy, synecdoche, and metaphor"), neither of which seems to have been thought to grant more direct access to the signified.[31]

Bahrani, then, uses this belief that the gods had encoded all of creation with signifiers and that these signifiers could be interpreted by various means to support the multivalency of royal and cultic representation in ancient Mesopotamia. Bahrani rejects the concept of representation as *mimesis*, where the representation is a secondary imitation of reality and functions to point away from itself, to an original reality. Instead, much like Gadamer, Bahrani notes that the "image" (Akk. *ṣalmu*), in ancient Mesopotamia, is better defined as "a doubling or a multiplication, but is not a copy in the sense of mimetic resemblance; rather it is a repetition, another way that the person or entity could be encountered."[32] Bahrani defines the image as "a mode of presencing."[33] In this way, it is a part of the "system of circulating presence"[34] and, thus, is one of a number of ways in which the thing or person can be accessed:

> [I]mage and name, and the organic body double of a person were all ways of encountering that person. A body double…, a wax or clay effigy, or a statue of durable materials…can be likened to the iconic or homophonic substitute signifier, which functions by means of resemblance. Likewise, things related to magical substitution (fragments of attire, fingernails, sand taken from one's footprint) as well as offspring or seed are metonymic extension of a person.[35]

As with the cuneiform script, there does not appear to be any one signifier that gives more direct access to the entity represented than another. However, there

29 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 115. This was true not only of dream and omen interpetation, but could also be carried over into names (see, J. Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning and the Gods* [trans. Z. Bahrani and M. Van De Mieroop; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992], 94).

30 Cf. J. Bottéro, "Symptômes, Signes, Écritures," in *Divination et Rationalité* (ed. J. P. Vernant; Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974), 161.

31 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 113.

32 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 135.

33 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 137.

34 Just as the signified could be accessed by means of a number of signs, in the cuneiform script, depending on how it was interpreted, so the thing or person could be accessed by means of various representations, see, e. g., Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 129.

35 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 128.

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does seem to be the assumption that the combination of as many signifiers as possible produces a representation that can become a full and valid substitute of the represented entity.[36] Thus, the transformational process, the making of the image through the encoding of signifiers, is very important for the ancient Mesopotamian conceptualization of presence-through-representation. This fact was well recognized even by later biblical polemicists, as we shall see.

We will look more closely at the concept of representation in ancient Mesopotamia in Chapter 2. While our investigation will also take into account the complicated nature of representation in the ancient Near East, we will not spend a great amount of time attempting to explain fully the concept by means of modern or postmodern philosophical categories. Although the use of these systems has highlighted the complex nature of the conceptualization, they nevertheless tend to "collapse" and "fall short" when applied to the ancient Mesopotamian evidence.[37] Thus, for example, the idea that a representation can function as a valid substitute for a represented entity cannot be fully explained by Peircian terminology, which relies on levels of proximity between the sign and reality. Further, although Gadamer recognized that an "ontological communion" exists between the image and its original and that the image has significance even apart from the represented entity, this tends to be for him an aesthetic reality. Again, there is no mistaking the representation for what is real. Even Bahrani must redefine many terms in her attempt to explain the ancient phenomena.[38] One of the chief difficulties in a task such as this is the use of modern terminology to explain ancient concepts. The danger of using terms like "icon," "symbol," or "index" to distinguish between different forms of cultic representation is that they have the potential of implying a different conception regarding the degree of presence contained/manifested by the representation. Thus, whenever possible we will use the more general term "representation" to refer to cultic stones, trees, and statues.[39] The term "image" (or "divine image," "cultic image," etc.), however, will be retained to refer to divine statuary (primarily reflecting the translation of Akk. *ṣalmu* / Heb. צלם).

Perhaps surprising to some, there are actually many helpful modern analogies in trying to grasp this ancient belief.[40] One of the most useful, however,

36 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 137.

37 See, e. g., *Graven Image*, 204. Note also Mettinger's own confession, *No Graven Image*, 22.

38 E.g., in contrast to mimetic iconicity, Bahrani labels the *ṣalmu* as a *simulacrum* "because it substitutes for the real itself" (*Graven Image*, 137). But this is at odds with the Platonic definition. See also below, p. 36 n.71.

39 Even this is not entirely satisfactory as the term "representation" already implies a distinction from the "real," a distinction that may not be relevant to the ancient conceptualization.

40 See the multiple examples in D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989). On the remarkable 48 day con-

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remains the Eucharistic analogy, in which bread and wine become the real presence of the divine Jesus.[41] The benefit of this analogy is that many in the West are intimately familiar with it. Despite the fact that many of these people operate, day in and day out, on the assumption that what is represented is ontologically distinct from the representation, for a brief period of time they suspend this assumption and grant that somehow these material objects have actually become the manifestation of their god.

1.2.2 Methodological Notes

The goal of the present thesis is to investigate the possibility that certain texts in the Hebrew Bible reflect aspects of this Mesopotamian conceptualization of representation. By necessity, therefore, we will be comparing two different cultures, ancient Israel and Mesopotamia. In order to make this argument as tight as possible, we will first examine the evidence in the wider context of biblical material in order to demonstrate that divine representations (stones, symbols, and even statues) were present and served as the central cultic representation for the Israelite cult(s) throughout Israel's history. In other words, we will suggest that divine representations in ancient Israel would have functioned exactly like the cult statues, symbols, and stones of other ancient Near Eastern cults. It is important to point out at the beginning that due to the nature of the written sources complete assurance in this conclusion is not possible. Rather, we must be content with plausibility. In this way, we hope to demonstrate that, despite the overly negative commentary of the biblical sources, it is more plausible that divine representations were the norm in pre-exilic Israel and that these representations would have functioned as the localized presence of the deity in question. We will also discuss many biblical texts that clearly demonstrate intimate knowledge of the conceptualization of divine images in Mesopotamia, and more importantly, the function and importance of the transformational ritual that was used to turn the human-made object into the god.

When we turn to the texts that will occupy the majority of this thesis, we will attempt to demonstrate not only literary and conceptual parallels that reflect some of the Mesopotamian concepts and concerns, but also the historical connections between the two cultures. In order to do this, we have chosen three

secration ritual for the marble image of Sai Baba in Madras city, see J. P. Waghorne, "The Divine Image in Contemporary South India: The Renaissance of a Once Maligned Tradition," in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East* (ed. M. Dick; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 211 – 43.

41 This analogy has been made by a number of recent scholars. See, e. g., T. Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (eds. P. D. Miller et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 22 – 3.

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passages that either belong to or are related to the Priestly material (P) in the Hebrew Bible, whether written (Gen 1), edited (Ex 34:29–35), or otherwise (Ezek 36–37).[42] Thus, one of the chief assumptions of this thesis is that the Babylonian exile had a particularly important influence on the final development of the Priestly stratum of the Hebrew Bible (whether ultimate or penultimate). This is not to say that the Priestly stratum is not diverse, incorporating some pre-exilic traditions, but that these traditions have been supplemented, modified, and edited through a lengthy transmission process during and, possibly just after, the exilic period.[43] The renewed debate over the nature of the Priestly material in the Pentateuch will have little impact on this thesis, so long as it is granted that the "stratum" consists both of longer written compositions (e. g., Gen 1:1–2:4a; Ex 25–31, 35–40, etc.) as well as editorial/redactional work that amplified and explicated older texts in, especially, the book of Exodus.[44]

42 Ezekiel's relationship to ancient Mesopotamian literature and concepts will be independently established below (chap. 4.3). Thus, in terms of historical connection, the relationship between Ezekiel and the Priestly stratum is of secondary importance. We will, further, leave open the question on Ezekiel's influence on the Priestly stratum. It will be suggested, however, that the "image of God" analogy appears to be better developed and more universal in the Priestly ideology.

43 Despite debate in some circles, a date in, or shortly after, the Babylonian Exile remains the consensus for the Priestly stratum. See, e. g., J. Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch* (London: SCM, 1992), 26, 238; F. Crüsemann, *The Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law* (trans. A. W. Mahnke; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 282 f; N. Lohfink, *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of the Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy* (trans. L. M. Maloney; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 98 n.5; E. Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (BZAW 189; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 221; F. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1997), 325; M. S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 41–3, 174; E. Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1998), 218–20.

44 It seems to me, then, that these two conceptions could fit equally well into the view that the Priestly tradition (P) consists of an originally independent narrative (P^G) that was supplemented (P^S) and subsequently worked into older material by a Priestly editor (R^P) and the view that the Priestly tradition consists of only a redactional or "compositional" layer (P, or according to Blum, K^P) of an existing narrative corpus, since many who hold the latter view have little difficulty assigning some larger compositions to the tradition. Most scholars, on both sides of the debate, view the Priestly redaction as a penultimate, if not ultimate, stage in the formation of the Pentateuch. For discussions, convenient summaries, and bibliographies of this current debate, see N. Lohfink, *Theology*, 143–7; R. E. Clements, "Pentateuchal Problems," in *Tradition and Interpretation* (ed. G. W. Anderson; Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 102–4; R. W. Klein, "The Message of P," in *Die Botschaft und die Boten: Festschrift für Hans Walter Wolff zum 70. Geburtstag* (eds. J. Jeremias and L. Perlitt; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981), 57–58; E. Zenger, *Gottes Bogen in den Wolken: Untersuchungen zu Komposition und Theologie der priesterschriftlichen Urgeschichte* (SB 112; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983), 32–35; D. A. Knight, "The Pentateuch," in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters* (eds. D. A. Knight and G. M. Tucker; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 285–6; K. Koch, "P-Kein Redaktor! Erinnerung an zwei Eckdaten der Quellenscheidung," *VT* 37 (1987), 446–56; Blum, *Studien*, 229–32; M. Vervenne, "The 'P' Tradition in the

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Given the nature of this thesis, which will be investigating three distinct texts for conceptual similarities to each other and ancient Mesopotamia, these and other such introductory comments will be dealt with more fully in their respective sections.

Pentateuch: Document and/or Redaction? The 'Sea Narrative' (Ex 13,17 – 14,31) As A Test Case," in C. Brekelmans and J. Lust (eds.), *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies* (BETL 94; Leuven, 1990), 21 – 25; Nicholson, *Pentateuch*, 196 – 221.

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2. Image and Presence in Mesopotamia

2.1 Introduction

Regarding contemporary interpretations of ancient Mesopotamian conceptualizations, Z. Bahrani writes, "[t]he axiomatic notion that representation is a means of imitating real things in the world must be set aside, as much as possible, in dealing with works of art from Near Eastern antiquity, even if this means risking an emphasized alterity with all its consequences."[1] In other words, the modern understanding that representation is a form of *mimesis*, a mere copy of a "real" object which exists outside of its referent must not cloud our interpretation of the ancients' conception. Ancient texts and inscriptions paint a more complicated picture. T. Jacobsen, in his groundbreaking article "The Graven Image," asks, "What, then, was the cult image?" His answer reveals the complexities surrounding the concept of representation in Mesopotamia:

> [A] cult statue is a foreshadowing of and a stage in divine presence, a theophany. Here the god can be found, can be approached…We must think…in terms of a purely mystic unity, the statue mystically becoming what it represents, the god, without, however, in any way limiting the god, who remains transcendent. In so "becoming," the statue ceases to be mere earthly wood, precious metal and stones, ceases to be the work of human hands. It becomes transubstantiated, a divine being, the god it represents.[2]

More recently, M. Dick points to the many examples in Mesopotamian literature where references to the deity by name effectively refer only to the statue of a deity and, following up on Jacobsen's use of Eucharistic terminology, makes the analogy:

1 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 122.
2 Jacobsen, "Graven Image," 22–3.

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> To Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians the bread and wine during the Eucharistic ritual become the real presence of the Divine Jesus, while subsisting under the appearance of bread and wine. This Eucharistic analogy helps us understand the theology of the ancient Near Eastern cult image. By the words of the Eucharistic Prayer and the invocation of the Holy Spirit (in Orthodox tradition), the bread and the wine "made by human hands" become the real presence of Jesus.[3]

In both ancient Mesopotamian and certain present-day Christian conceptualizations, the material representation of the deity is much more than a symbol, icon, or index (in Peircian terminology).[4] In these traditions, the divide between what is real and what is representation is not at all apparent. For both ancient Mesopotamian and Christian worshippers, the representation is, in fact, real: "(Jesus) did not say, 'This is the symbol of my body and this of my blood,' but 'this is my body and my blood,' teaching us not to see the nature of the object, for, in becoming Eucharist, the objects are changed into the body and blood of Christ."[5]

Jacobsen's and Dick's comments make it clear that the ancient Mesopotamians did not recognize a distinct separation between the material and spiritual world, a distinction taken for granted today. Indeed, both scholars make use of Eucharistic terminology in order to explain the overlapping of the contemporary distinctions between symbol and referent.

2.2 Images and Presence in Mesopotamia

2.2.1 *Mīs pî*/ *pīt pî* Ritual

At present, the best-known "transubstantiating" rituals in Mesopotamia are the closely related *mīs pî* ("Mouth-Washing") and *pīt pî* ("Mouth-Opening") rituals known primarily from first millennium texts of Assyria and Babylon.[6] The rit-

3 M. Dick, "The Mesopotamian Cult Statue: A Sacramental Encounter with Divinity," in *Cult Image and Divine Representation in the Ancient Near East* (ed. N. H. Walls; ASOR 10; Boston: ASOR, 2005), 51; cf. S. Herring, "A 'Transubstantiated' Humanity: The Relationship between the Divine Image and the Presence of God in Gen. i 26 f," *VT* 58 (2008), 480 – 94.

4 See above, chap. 1.

5 Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On Matthew 26:26*, Patrologia graeca 66.713. Translation in Dick, "Sacramental," 52.

6 References to the ritual go back to the third millennium. For the history of the ritual, see Berlejung, *Theologie*, 191 – 2. For the growth and development of the ritual, see C. Walker and M. Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian Mīs Pī Ritual: Transliteration, Translation, and Commentary* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001), 18 – 20. For text and translation of these texts, see Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 33 – 245; *idem*, "The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian *Mīs Pî* Ritual," in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient*

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uals use language of gestation and birth to "recreate" the cult statue as the god.[7] The purpose of these rituals can be summed up in the first line of one incantation: "On the day when the god was created (and) the pure statue was completed" (STT 200:2).[8] According to Berlejung, the function of these rituals was,

> …to establish perfect purity and to enable contact between the earthly and divine worlds. Having followed this procedure, the thus purified image became 'charged' with positive powers. The prime purpose of the *mouth-opening* rites, therefore, was to activate these powers.[9]

These statues, having gone through the purification, charging (*mīs pî*), and activating (*pīt pî*) ritual(s), were then effectively considered to be the god. According to Bahrani, after the consecration ceremony, "[t]he statue, which had by then become a god, was no longer referred to as *ṣalmu*, the Akkadian word for image or statue."[10] Thereafter, it was referred to by the name of the god or goddess it represented.[11] Indeed, the Ninevite Ritual Text makes the divine na-

Near East (ed. M. Dick; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 55 – 122; Berlejung, *Theologie*, 422 – 73. For recent discussions of these texts, see Jacobsen, "Graven Image," 15 – 32; Berlejung, *Theologie*, 191 – 283; *idem,* "Washing the Mouth: The Consecration of Divine Images in Mesopotamia," in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. K. van der Toorn; CBET 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 45 – 72; Walker and Dick, "Induction," 55 – 122; R. Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 140 – 3; Herring, "Transubstantiated," 480 – 94; cf. A. Schüle, "Made in the Image of God: The Concepts of Divine Images in Gen. 1 – 3," *ZAW* 117 (2005), 1 – 20, who compares the ritual to Gen 2 – 3.

7 Walker and Dick, "Induction," 68, 116 – 7; cf. A. Spycket, *Les statues de culte dans les textes mésopotamiens des origines à la I^re^ dynastie de Babylone* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1968), 37 – 40; V. Hurowitz, "The Mesopotamian God Image, from Womb to Tomb," *JAOS* 123 (2003), 147 – 57; Jacobsen, "Graven Image," 23 – 28; Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 142 – 4.

8 Translation by Walker and Dick, "Induction," 98. The reference to the deity, in this line, prompts Berlejung to argue that the god was already thought to be present in the statue before the incantation ("Washing," 71 – 2; cf. Theologie, 177 n.932). B. Sommer, however, maintains that, "the incantation cited by Berlejung may refer to 'the day when the god was created' because on that day the statue became or received a god, not because the object was already regarded as a god even before that day's ritual began" (*The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2009], 183 – 4 n.40). Both may be correct, since "in rituals the goal of liturgy may be proleptically reached from the beginning" (Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 7 n.10).

9 "Washing," 45; cf. *Theologie*, 281.

10 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 171; cf. *CAD* Ṣ 79a–80a, 84b–5a; Berlejung, *Theologie*, 64.

11 As B. Porter points out, however, there are examples of *ṣalmu* qualifying the name of the god, "indicating the name identified a particular statue or other visual representation in the temple in question" ("The Anxiety of Multiplicity: Concepts of Divinity as One and Many in Ancient Assyria," in *One God or Many: Concepts of Divinity in the Ancient World* [ed. B. Porter; Casco Bay, ME: Casco Bay Assyriological Institute, 2000], 236). See, e.g., *Kippat-māti-ṣalmu* in the *tākultu* texts (K. 252 I, 12). For transliteration and commentary of these texts, see R. Frankena, *Tākultu De Sacrale Maaltijd in het Assyrische Ritueel* (Leiden: Brill,

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ture of the statue explicitly obvious. After the priest performs the *mīs pî* and *pīt pî* (line 161), the text prescribes the following (lines 164 – 168):

> Into the ear of that god you speak as follows:
> "You are counted among your brother gods,"
> you whisper into his right ear.
> "From today may your destiny be counted as divinity;
> with your brother gods you are counted…"[12]

Signs and terminology likely to be found accompanying descriptions of the statue further confirm the divinized nature of it. As Sommer, among others, notes, "[i]n some Akkadian texts, the word *ṣalmu* is preceded by the divine determinative…indicating that the statue itself is accorded divine status."[13] Further, many incantations characterize the statue in ways identical to the way the gods are described elsewhere.[14] Thus, the gods are described in many myths and poetry as "radiant," "shining," "pure," and "brilliant."[15] These terms are similarly applied to the divine statue, after consecration (Ninevite Ritual Text lines 160 – 2):

> He/you recite(s) incantation, "On the day when the god was created,"
> and you prostrate yourself and
> you perform mouth-washing and mouth-opening.
> Afterward you/he recite(s) the incantation, "Pure statue, suited to great divine attributes."[16]

Or (STT 200: 2 – 10):

> Incantation: when the god was fashioned, the pure statue completed, the god appeared in all the lands, bearing an awe-inspiring halo, he is adorned with lordliness; lordly, he is all pride; surrounded with splendor, endowed with awesome appearance, it appeared magnificently, the statue shone brilliant.[17]

The Ninevite Ritual Text quoted earlier implies that the ritual imbued the statue with the ability to hear. The ritual, however, was thought to activate more than hearing in the *ṣalmu*. Through the ritual, the *ṣalmu* was also "empowered to

1954), 5 – 9; B. Menzel, *Assyrische Tempel* (Rome: Pontifico Istituto Biblico, 1981), 2:T113–T125.

12 Text and translation in Walker and Dick, "Induction," 94, 95; cf. Berlejung, *Theologie*, 430 – 31.

13 The divine determinative, i. e. the DINGIR sign, is usually transliterated with a superscript ^{d}). E.g., in the *tākultu* texts mentioned earlier one finds *Aššur-^{d}ṣalmāni* (K. 252 I, 27).

14 For this point and the following comparisons, see also Sommer, *Bodies*, 20 – 21.

15 On the Akkadian terms *melammu, pulḫu, puluḫtu, namrirrû*, etc, see E. Cassin, *La Splendeur Divine* (Paris: La Haye, 1968), 17 – 22; A. L. Oppenheim, "Akkadian pul(u)ḫ(t)u and melammu," *JAOS* 63 (1943), 31 – 34.

16 Text and translation in Walker and Dick, "Induction," 94, 95.

17 The line numbering in this text skips because the text is bilingual. Text and translation in Walker and Dick, *Induction,* 136 – 8, 149 – 50 (lines 49ab–54ab).

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speak, or see, or to act, through various culturally-subscribed channels."[18] In contrast, before the ritual, the *ṣalmu* was considered inanimate: "This statue (*ṣalam*) without its mouth opened cannot smell incense, cannot eat food, nor drink water" (STT 200: 43 – 44).[19] Thus, after the ritual the *ṣalmu* was not only divine, it was alive and it was cared for accordingly. It was clothed, fed, and bathed on a daily basis.[20]

2.2.2 Divine Abandonment and Abduction

The close relation between a deity's image and the deity meant that the "abduction" of a divine statue from a city could be described in terms of the deity's abandonment of that city and, likewise, the image's return meant the return of the divine presence and favor.[21] The *Marduk Prophecy*, for example, portrays the capture of Marduk's statue by the Hittites (1594 BCE)[22] and the Assyrians (by Tukulti-Ninurta I, 1243 – 1207 BCE),[23] and his subsequent return(s) to Babylon as stemming from the deity's own volition:

> I (Marduk) gave the command that I go to Hatti, I put Hatti to the test, there I set up the throne of my supreme godhead. For twenty-four years I dwelt there. I made it possible for Babylonians to send (commercial) expeditions there, and they marketed(?) its [] goods and property [in] Sippar, Nippur, [and Babylo]n.
>
> A king of Babylon arose [and] led [me in procession to]…Babylon…I returned, [and for Babylon I said], "Bring [your tribute, ye] lands [to Babylon]!" (*gap*)
>
> [The king? of] Baltil (Assur) was pleasing [to me]…I bestowed [] and abundance [upon him]…I set upon him wings like a bird and I delivered all [lands] (into his power), I blessed the land of Assur. I gave him the [tablet?] of destinies, I granted him stability.

18 I. Winter, "Idols of the King: Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia," *JRS* 6 (1992), 13.

19 Text and translation in Walker and Dick, "Induction," 99, 114 n.136.

20 Cf. G. Meier, "Die Ritualtafel der Serie Mundwaschung," *AfO* 12 (1937 – 39), 40 – 45; A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1964), 184; J. Renger, "Kultbild: A. Philologisch," *RLA* 6:312 – 13; Winter, "Idols," 13 – 42; E. Matsushima, "Divine Statues in Ancient Mesopotamia: Their Fashioning and Clothing and Their Interaction with Society," in *Official Cult and Popular Religion in the Ancient Near East* (ed. E. Matsushima; Heidelberg: Universitätverlag C. Winter, 1993), 209 – 19; Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 134.

21 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 174; W. W. Hallo, "Cult Statue and Divine Image: A Preliminary Study," in *Scripture in Context 2: More Essays on the Comparative Method* (ed. W. W. Hallo et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 13 – 14.

22 Cf. the Agum-kakrime inscription in B. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda, ME: CDL Press, 2005), 361 – 3.

23 Cf. the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic in Foster, *Muses*, 299 – 317.

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> […[I retur]ned, and for Babylon I said, "Bring your tribute, ye lands!…"
>
> I am Marduk, great lord, lord of destinies and decisions am I! Who (but me) made this journey? I have returned from whence I have gone, it was I who ordered it.[24]

The text not only portrays Marduk's deportation and return as self-imposed,[25] but also notes that his time among the foreign nations brought about blessings for that nation. Thus, Bahrani concludes,

> The god therefore chose to go to other cities. Assyria could even prosper due to his presence, but it was always Babylon that was his rightful home, and it was Marduk himself who decided to return… Taking the cult statue of an enemy land was therefore not an act of barbaric plunder but one of taking the enemy's source of divine power into captivity and thus suppressing its power.[26]

Despite the apparent unity between deity and statue in Mesopotamia, the deity was not thought to be coterminous with his or her image. Thus, a god could abandon his statue for a multitude of reasons.[27] In the eighth century BCE *Erra Epic*, the god Erra points out the disheveled appearance of Marduk's statue (1:127 – 29):

> What happened to your attire (*šukuttu*)[28], to your insignia of your lordship, magnificent as the stars in the sk[y]? It has been [d]irtied! (What happened) to the crown of your lordship, which made Eḫalanki as bright as Etemenanki? Its surface is shrouded over![29]

Erra, then, proposes to rule in Marduk's stead while he departs from the statue during its restoration (1:180):

24 Translated by Foster, *Muses*, 388 – 9.

25 Hallo, "Cult Statue," 12.

26 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 179.

27 For a thorough review of the texts describing this phenomenon, see J. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel* (BJS 7; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 56 – 58, 103 – 23. More often than not, the cause of the deity's abandonment of his statue is anger (see, e. g., M. Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion Assyria, Judah, and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.* [Missoula: Scholars, 1974], 9 – 21).

28 For the translation of the Akkadian *šukuttu* as "statue" see D. Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra* (OBO 104; Frieburg: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1991), 192, following, Cassin, *Splendeur*, 49 n.86; cf. "précieuse image" (J. Bottéro, *Mythes et Rites de Babylone* (Genève: Slatkine, 1985), 266; "prezioso apparato" (L. Cagni, *L'Epopea Di Erra* [Istituto Di Studi Del Vicino Oriente: Università Di Roma, 1969], 71,182 – 3). Elsewhere, Cagni states that "[t]he word 'attire' seems to be one of the more appropriate translations of the Akkadian *šukuttu* which, in the poem of Erra, indicates all that constitutes the decoration of the statue of Marduk (precious metals and stones, tiara, vestments, etc.)" (*The Poem of Erra* [*SANE* 1/3; Malibu: Undena, 1977], 31 n.34).

29 Translation by Cagni, *Erra*, 32.

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> (Erra) opened his mouth and spoke to prince Marduk, "Until you enter that house, prince Marduk, and Girra purifies your garment and you return to your place, till then I shall rule in your stead…"[30]

It is likewise clear that the presence of the deity could exist in heaven and earth simultaneously[31] and that the deity's presence on earth could be in multiple locations at the same time,[32] with no priority given to any one representation as being a more valid manifestation of the presence of the god than any other. Thus, for example, it seems that Šamaš and Ištar could simultaneously be present in each of their cult images in various cities[33] as well as their respective heavenly bodies.[34]

2.2.3 Images of Humans

Royal images could likewise be subject to a Mouth Washing Ritual and they, like cultic statues, were treated like living beings.[35] Thus, for example, the royal images of Gudea of Lagash (ca. 2100 BCE) and his son, Ur-Ningirsu, were dedicated to particular deities, placed in a temple or shrine, and received regular offerings.[36] According to I. Winter, these images were "provided with messages to be communicated to the god through direct discourse."[37]

30 Translation by Cagni, *Erra*, 34.

31 Jacobsen, "Graven Image," 17 – 18; cf. P. Pitkänen, *Central Sanctuary and Centralization of Worship in Ancient Israel: From the Settlement to the Building of Solomon's Temple* (New Jersey: Gorgias, 2003), 27.

32 Jacobsen, "Graven Image," 16 – 17; cf. Dick, "Sacramental," 53.

33 Dick also notes that several images of Marduk existed within the same temple in Babylon ("Sacramental," 53); cf. A. R. George, "Marduk and the Cult of the Gods of Nippur at Babylon," *Or* 66 (1997), 65 – 70.

34 Jacobsen, "Graven Image," 17. Yet even here one must keep in mind that the distinction between heaven and earth is not so clear, either. Ancient temples served as a meeting place between the heavens and the earth. Thus, various temples were called É.dur.an.ki (House, bond of Heaven and Earth), É.temen.an.ki (House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth), É.giš.lam.šar.šar, "House where heaven and underworld mingle," etc. (see A. R. George, *House Most High: Temples of Ancient Mesopotamia* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993], 80, 149, and 417, respectively; cf. Berlejung, "Washing," 51).

35 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 172; Winter, "Idols," 13 – 42; Meier, "Ritualtafel," 40 – 45; E. Reiner and M. Civil, "Another Volume of Sultantepe Tablets," *JNES* 26 (1967), 200 – 11; Walker and Dick notes that "[m]outh-washing was not confined to the ritual for the dedication of divine statues. It was also used in rituals for divine symbols…for cultic impedimenta, for the king himself…and in a variety of other fragmentary ritual contexts" ("Induction," 71; cf. *idem*, *Induction*, 15; Berlejung, *Theologie*, 182 – 5).

36 Cf. Winter, "Idols," 15. For text and translation of Gudea Cylinder B, see H. Steible, *Die neusumerischen Bau- und Weihinschriften* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1991), 156 – 79; D. O. Edzard, *Gudea and His Dynasty* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1997), 88 – 101.

37 Winter, "Idols," 15.

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The 1976 discovery of the royal statue and inscriptions of Hadduyitî of Guzana (eighth century BCE) likewise confirms the importance of a king's presence as extended and manifested through his *ṣalmu*.[38] This discovery is significant for biblical scholars as the two introductory sections include the Aramaic דמות and צלם (both translating the Akk. *ṣalmu* in lines 12–15), corresponding to the biblical terminology in Genesis 1:26 f. and 5:3. As noted by Schüle, this text is not only remarkable because it provides an extra-biblical parallel to the combination of the notions דמות and צלם, it further sheds light on the concept of the "image" itself.[39] According to line 1.1 f., "the likeness (דמותא) of Hadduyitî" is set up "before Hadad of Sikkan, the lord of heaven and earth." This same statue is later described as "the image of Hadduyitî" (הדיסעי צלם, l.12), "this likeness" (דמותא זאת, l.15), and "his image" (צלמה, l.16). The king's image, set up in front of his god, serves a special function. According to Schüle, "[i]t makes the king present in the face of his god, while he himself might be absent."[40] In this way, it allows the king access to continual communication and supra-human authority.[41] The king's image is not, first and foremost, propaganda. It is not simply an imitation of the king before his god; it is the presence of the king extended, or manifested, continually before his god.[42] "Put in more general terms," Schüle concludes, "the image is part of the person of the king, not just some well crafted art object essentially detached from what it expresses."[43]

The use of substitute images in imitative or sympathetic magic is common in the extant literature.[44] The Mesopotamian *Maqlû* and *Šurpu* texts are replete with examples of substitute objects burned, consumed, thrown in water, etc. in order to procure some effect on the one represented. Thus, for instance, the

38 For text and discussion, see T. J. Lewis and D. M. Gropp, "Notes on Some Problems in the Aramaic Text of the Hadd-Yithi Bilingual," *BASOR* 259 (1985), 46–61; A. Abou-Assaf, "Die Statue des Hdys'y, König von Guzana," *MDOG* 113 (1981), 3–22; A. Angerstorfer, "Gedanken zur Analyse der Inschrift(en) der Beterstatue vom Tel Fecherije," *BN* 24 (1984), 7–11; C. Dohmen, "Die Statue von Tell Fecherīye und die Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen: Ein Beitrag zur Bildterminologie," *BN* 22 (1983), 91–106; R. Garr, "'Image' and 'Likeness' in the Inscription from Tell Fakhariyeh," *IEJ* 50 (2000), 227–34.

39 Schüle, "Image of God," 10.

40 Schüle, "Image of God," 10. Bahrani notes that "[t]he audience or intended viewer was not of the greatest import in many cases because the work of art was put in a position where it was only viewed by the king, his courtiers, or temple officials. In these cases whatever meanings were generated through imagery has much less to do with the good opinion of the chance viewer than they did with the power of the image as a means of creating an incessant presence" (Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 186).

41 Schüle, "Image of God," 10; cf. Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 186; Winter, "Idols," 34.

42 "The image is [the king's] substance and a real presence…The image repeats, rather than represents, the king" (Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 144).

43 Schüle, "Image of God," 10; cf. Bahrani, who succinctly concludes, "[i]n Assyria, if the king is in his image, so too is the image in the king" (*Graven Image*, 146).

44 *CAD* Ṣ 84 f.; cf. Berlejung, *Theologie*, 62–3 with n.342 and n.343, 188 n.1001.

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Maqlû tablets include a sequence in which a witch is put on trial *in absentia*. Upon a guilty verdict, her representation is burned:

> My witch and my sorceress is sitting in the shadow behind a brick pile. She is sitting there, practicing witchcraft against me, fashioning figurines of me. I am going to dispatch against you thyme and sesame, I will scatter your sorceries, will stuff your words back into your mouth! May the witchcraft you performed be aimed at yourself, may the figurines you made represent yourself, may the water you drew be that of your own body! May your spell not close in on me, may your words not overcome me.[45]

According to W. Farber, "[t]he text takes great pains to secure the identity of the effigy with the perpetrator, who, as in all surviving witchcraft texts, remains anonymous and, presumably unknown to the victim."[46] Thus, the effigy or figurine was put on trial and punished for the crimes of its referent.

That this sort of procedure was thought to be efficacious is seen in a text of Ashurbanipal (ca. 699 – 631 BCE), who captures the image of a king (Tammaritu) after this king escaped:

> [The statue of Tammaritu], the latter, [who at the command of] Assur [and] Ishtar [from] Elam had fled, had laid hold [of my feet] and performed (a vassal's) service, I took [from] Elam to Assyria.[47]

And again, in this same text, Ashurbanipal speaks of punishing a king already dead:

> [The statue] of Hallusu, king of Elam, the one who plotted evil against Assyria, and engaged in hostilities against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, my grandfather,—his tongue (*lit.*, mouth) which had been slandering(?), I cut off; his lips which had spoken insolence, I pierced; his hands, which had grasped the bow to fight against Assyria, I chopped off. To proclaim the glory of Assur and Ishtar, the gods, my allies, in the gate…[48]

The example par excellence of this type of belief, however, is the ritual of the substitute king (*šar/ṣalam pûhi/andunâni*[49]). The documentation of this ritual in Mesopotamia ranges from the First Dynasty of Isin under Erra-imitti (1868 – 1861 BCE) to the Neo-Assyrian period.[50] The ritual prescribes the steps taken

45 *Maqlû* 5:1 – 9. Translation by W. Farber, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *CANE* 3:1898.

46 Farber, "Witchcraft," 3:1898; cf. Bottéro, *Mesopotamia*, 142.

47 Translation in *ARAB* 2:363.

48 Translation in *ARAB* 2:363.

49 Lit. "king/image of substitution/replacement."

50 Bottéro, *Mesopotamia*, 138 – 40. Bottéro notes that there may be some evidence that the ritual was practiced in Greece during the reign of Alexander the Great (see Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, LXXIIIf.; Arrian, *Anabasis*, VII, 24; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca*, XVII, 116.), in Persia (see Herodotus, VII, 15), and in Rome (see Suetonius, *Life of Claudius*, XXIX, 3). There is an analogous thirteenth century Hittite ritual, which was "probably borrowed from Me-

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when danger to the king's life was predicted through omens. In this event, a living person became the king's substitute and, thus, the intended target of the omens. The substitute was given the king's name, clothes and insignia. "The living substitute is referred to in the texts by the Akkadian term *ṣalmu*."[51]

These substitution rituals required some kind of "close bond" between the representation and the one represented. According to Bottéro, the bond consisted of contact or resemblance, "with a frequent combination of the two."[52] Bahrani, however, notes that such a bond could be established though repetition (resemblance or imitation), extension (contact or contiguity), and/or displacement (metaphor or metonymy).[53] The ritual of the substitute king depended on four elements: "a certain level of resemblance (preferably a man, not an animal),[54] contiguity or contamination (garments),[55] vocal signifier of the utterance of the name, and the inscription (sewn into his garment)."[56] In other words, for the *ṣalmu* to become a valid substitute of the referent required a process of transformation that included contiguity, imitation, and a performative utterance.

The established bond between the representation and the represented meant that real harm could come to the referent by means of the image. This is clearly seen in a fragment of a ritual for the preparation of war.[57] This text describes a ritual meant to influence a coming battle. Figurines were used to represent the enemy (with their heads turned backwards to signify fleeing) and a representative of the native army, confronting the enemy. Significantly, however, the figurine representing the native army was not the commander of the army (i. e. the king) but was an officer who shared a name with the king and was dressed with the royal sash. According to Bottéro, "this fictional battle…was supernaturally dangerous because it was sacramental."[58] The risk to the king was considered real, thus, he was replaced.

Given the prospect of real harm coming to the referent of such "images," other

sopotamia" (*Mesopotamia*, 139). For a review and discussion of the relevant texts, see S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1983; repr., Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 2: xxii-xxxii.

51 Bahrani, *Graven Image,* 173; cf. Bottéro, *Mesopotamia*, 138 – 52.

52 Bottéro, *Mesopotamia*, 142.

53 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 129.

54 "[T]he resemblance did not need to be mimetic, for it was not mimesis that made the image a valid functioning representation of the person" (Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 129 – 30).

55 "The idea that the garment is an extension may seem odd to the modern reader, but in the ancient Near East the fact that this notion was common sensical is easily demonstrated by numerous references to the practice of representing an individual, in juridicial cases, for example by the fringe of a garment" (Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 130).

56 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 130.

57 For text and translation, see H. Zimmern, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1901), no. 57, p. 172 – 3.

58 Bottéro, *Mesopotamia*, 138.

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precautionary measures were taken to ensure their wellbeing. The punishment against one who would harm a king's image invoked the well-known Near Eastern paradigm of *lex talionis* in which the punishment selected is the one most fitting for the crime. Curses on these images consistently called for the ending of progeny and the sterilization of the attacker "thereby not only ending his existence but making any survival through his offspring impossible."[59] For example, one curse states,

> Whosoever should deface the statue of Rimush
> and put his name on it and say "It is my statue,"
> let Enlil, the lord of this statue, and Shamash
> tear out his genitals and drain out his semen,
> let them not give him any heir
> let him be unable to stand in front of his god.[60]

The image was on par with progeny or the continuation of seed.[61] To destroy the image of the king was equivalent to the denial of lineage, both meant to immortalize the referent.[62] Conversely, as we have seen, the king's image could be abducted and forced to stand trial in the stead of the referent.

The abduction of and assault on the king's image should be understood in psychological and magical terms, not merely politically.[63] The belief that real harm could come to the referent through one's image (sympathetic magic) is well attested and is likely to be a facet of the belief and practice of divination.[64] Just as the appearance of irregular events in the world could predict a specific fate or event, so too could ominous signs be read directly on the body, e. g., moles or skin discolorations.[65]

For the Assyrians and Babylonians signs were written into the real. They believed that one could read the events of the cosmos in order to gain access to the pleasure/displeasure of the gods and, thus, the future. The "science" of

59 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 170.

60 Text and translation in G. Buccellati, "Through a Tablet Darkly," in *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo* (eds. M. Cohen et al.; Bethesda: CDL, 1993), 68, 70; cf. Z. Bahrani, "Assault and Abduction: The Fate of the Royal Image in the Ancient Near East," *Art History* 18 (1995), 374.

61 This is clearly seen in the terminology associated with the divine image. As Garr notes, "[b]ecause it is 'born', the 'image' is not a strictly manufactured product. Instead, it is a ritually induced descendent of its referent. In a certain sense, the 'image' is the referent's child" (Garr, *Image and Likeness,* 143; cf. J. Hehn, "Zum Terminus 'Bild Gottes,'" in *Festschrift Eduard Sachau* [ed. G. Weil; Berlin, 1915], 43).

62 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 182.

63 Cf. Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 174 – 82. Note also the thorough discussion of this practice in Freedberg, *Power of Images*, 246 – 82, 378 – 428.

64 For a detailed discussion regarding the belief and practice of divination, see Bottéro, *Mesopotamia*, 125 – 37.

65 Cf. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 221.

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divination, according to Bottéro, was a sort of pictography that functioned on the belief that the gods had written into creation:

> Si les vieux Mésopotamiens imaginaient en vérité que les dieux écrivaient en intervenant dans la 'création,' tout l'univers visible, pour autant qu'il dépendait de la causalité divine, constituait donc, au moins virtuellement, comme une immense page d'écriture.[66]

The omen catalogues list examples from all parts of life, from unusual phenomena to everyday occurrences, including certain aspects of physiognomy of human beings. It was thought that a physical body was inscribed with signs that could be read.[67] These signifiers could then be transferred into other signs in order to unite the sign and the signified. In this way, the image of the king would be encoded by means of signifiers, such as the "written name," in order to "link them directly to his person."[68] Thus, constructions such as *šiṭir šumija u ṣa-lam šarrūtija maḫar Šamaš u Aja….ukīn*, usually translated "I set up before Šamaš and Aja an inscription with my name and a statue of me as king,"[69] should instead be translated "I set up, before Šamaš and Aja the written (characters) of my name and (visual) image/physical manifestation of my kingship,"[70] noting the possessive construction of *ṣa-lam šarrūtija*, which emphasizes the natural unity/bond between the *ṣalmu* and the king.

The complexity of this concept, i. e. that a representation "becomes an entity in its own right," is exactly the reason why scholars such as Jacobsen and Dick refer to the Eucharistic conception of "real presence." This type of conceptualization has been contrasted with a Platonic, *mimetic* view of representation in which reality and representation are seen as disparate things, both logically and ontologically. In such a view, the representation is considered an imitation of the referent and, therefore, secondary to it. In the ancient Near East, however, *ṣalmu* was not simply an imitation of the referent but actually substituted for it, becoming part of the real itself. In this way, Bahrani finds the Platonic distinction between icons (εἰκών), which are *mimetic* copies of what is real, and simulacra (φάντασμα), which "parade as independent beings," to be the more apt comparison.[71] Thus, in Platonic terminology, *ṣalmu* is better defined as

66 "If the ancient Mesopotamians truly imagined that the gods wrote by intervening in creation, then all the visible world, as far as it depended on divine causality, constituted therefore, at least virtually, a huge page of writing" (Bottéro, "Symptômes," 161).

67 "All bodies are…encoded by the gods, not simply the royal body. But the king's body bears the omens of kingship…The physical signs could be read as the divine destiny of kingship, literally written into the body-text" (Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 136).

68 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 136.

69 *CAD* Ṣ 81.

70 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 135.

71 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 125, 202. Plato clearly distinguishes between an icon and a phantasm

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a simulacrum rather than a copy. "It is a simulacrum," states Bahrani, "because it substitutes for the real itself or rather, is part of the real just as omens are not chance occurrences and dreams are not illusions."[72] In this way, for example, a king could be taken captive and even punished through his image. The "rites of constitution,"[73] through which an image was inscribed with the signifiers that made up the represented (name, clothes, hair, etc.), brought the image into direct and physical relation with him. This established bond between image and referent is another reason for the inscribed curses: "The fear was of a supernatural maleficent result that affected the subject, even beyond the grave."[74]

The Akkadian *ṣalmu*, then, does not refer to a mere statue of a deity or a king. Instead, what we are dealing with here is a complicated ontological belief, where, by means of a transformative ritual, the "real" presence of the referent is transubstantiated into the representation with the result that the representation exists as a valid substitute of said referent. The consequences of such a belief can be seen in the great care taken that no harm would come to one's substitute or, conversely, that a bad omen would fall upon a substitute, thereby protecting the referent from the ill effects of the omen.

2.3 Humans as the Image of God in Mesopotamia

As we have already noted, *ṣalmu* is the term most frequently used to designate a divine cult image. This term, however, is also used to designate the relationship between deity and kings as well as, in at least one instance, a priest. E. M. Curtis' study[75] of these uses in Mesopotamian literature is quite comprehensive and will be, for the most part, followed here.

in *Sophist* 235e–236d. The icon is a representation that conforms to the proportions of the original in every way. The phantasm, however, does not depend on strict likeness ("the artists abandon truth"), but on the beholder's point of view. It was this disconnection between the representation and the original that appears to disturb Plato. There are indeed obvious differences between Plato's use of the term and Bahrani's description of *ṣalmu*. Images in Mesopotamia are not completely disconnected from that which they represent, but remain ontologically connected with their objects.

72 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 137.

73 Winter, "Idols," 35.

74 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 182.

75 E. M. Curtis, "Man as the Image of God in Genesis in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Parallels" (Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1984), 80–86, 155–72.

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2.3.1 King as Image

Of the five instances in which the designation *ṣalam ili* / DN is used to refer to a human,[76] four refer to the Assyrian king. The first and probably earliest instance is found in the late thirteenth century BCE *Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta*.[77] The epic describes the repeated conflict between the Kassite king Kaštiliaš IV (1245 – 1235 BCE) and the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244 – 1208 BCE). There is little doubt that the epic is an Assyrian effort to celebrate the successful campaign of Tukulti-Ninurta, who is described in glowing terms compared to the wicked and treacherous Kaštiliaš. This bias is demonstrated at the very beginning where "Kaštiliaš is…already condemned by the gods for his treachery against Assyria…[and]…Tukulti-Ninurta follows as the agent of the gods who will carry out the punishment."[78] This first column continues in this vein with a hymn to Tukulti-Ninurta extolling his "military powers and his special closeness to the gods"[79]:

> Glorious is his vehemence; it scorches(?) the unfearing in front and rear;
> Glowing is his aggressiveness; it burns the disobedient to the left and the right;
> Frightful are his effulgences (*melammū*); they overwhelm all the enemies.
> He who controls the entire four directions, the awe-inspiring one(?)—
> the assembly of all the kings fear him continually.
> Like Adad when he thunders, the mountains tremble;
> And like Ninurta when he raises his weapons, the regions (of the world) everywhere are thrown into continual panic.
> By the fate (determined by) Nudimmud (=Ea), his mass is reckoned with the flesh of the gods.
> By the decision of the lord of all the lands (=Enlil), he was successfully engendered through/cast into the channel of the womb of the gods.
> He alone is the eternal image (*ṣalmu*) of Enlil, attentive to the voice of the people, to the counsel of the land.
> (1:10 – 18)[80]

76 *CAD* Ṣ 79 f.

77 For text, translation, and discussion, see P. Machinist, "Kingship and Divinity in Imperial Assyria," in G. M. Beckman and T. J. Lewis (eds.), *Text, Artifact, and Image* (BJS 346; Providence, RI: Brown University, 2006), 160 – 4; cf. *idem*, "The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I: A Study in Middle Assyrian Literature" (Dissertation, Yale University, 1978), 66 – 69, 174 – 211; *idem*, "Literature as Politics: The Tukulti-Ninurta Epic and the Bible," *CBQ* 38 (1976), 455 – 82; W. G. Lambert, "Three Unpublished Fragments of the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic," *AfO* 18 (1957 – 58), 38 – 51; Curtis, "Man," 80 – 86.

78 Machinist, "Literature," 456.

79 Machinist, "Literature," 456.

80 Translation in Machinist, "Epic," 66 – 69; Curtis, "Man," 81.

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Curtis explains that the description of Tukulti-Ninurta as the "image of Enlil" is best seen as a "functional" designation.[81] The king is compared to the gods by means of his military power and his attentiveness to his people in the immediate context. However, the king is described in ways that are somewhat anomalous in other Mesopotamian royal descriptions. According to P. Machinist, the description of the king's frightful "effulgences" (*melammū*) "has no precedent in the earlier Assyrian inscriptions"[82] and, compared to earlier inscriptions about the king's relationship to the gods,[83] "Tukulti-Ninurta is elevated to divine status."[84] Indeed, Machinist notes that the imagery of Tukulti-Ninurta as the divine image is further underscored by the description of the king's birth and body: he is "engendered" in the divine "womb" and "cast/poured out," like a metal statue, through the "channel/mould." Further, the description of the king's body as "the flesh of the gods" (*šēr ilāne*), points, "not only to the divine birth, but to the statue, exactly as in the *Erra Epic*, where the prized and exotic *mesu*-wood used for making divine statues is called *šēr ilāne*."[85]

On two occasions, the scholar and *āšipu* priest Adad-šumu-uṣur addresses king Esarhaddon (680 – 669 BCE) as the image of a god. In one instance, the kindness of the king, in apparently granting a request of Adad-šumu-uṣur, is compared to that of the god Bēl:

> …the father of the king, my lord, was the very image (*ṣalmu*) of the god Bēl, and the king, my lord, is likewise the very image (*ṣalmu*) of the god Bēl.[86]

In a second instance, the occasion of the description of Esarhaddon as the "image of Šamaš" is harder to decipher. It seems to be an effort to get the king to eat, perhaps in order to hasten the king's recovery from an illness:

> Why, today already for the second day, is the table not brought to the king, my lord? Who (now) stays in the dark much longer than the Sun (Šamaš), the king of the gods, stays in the dark a whole day and night, (and) again two days? The king, the lord of the

81 Curtis, "Man," 164.

82 Machinist, "Literature," 465; cf. *idem*, "Kingship," 162. Note the use of the related *namurratu* and *puluḫtu* at tablet 2 A line 25 and 5 A line 20, respectively.

83 Machinist notes that earlier inscriptions "put this rather modestly and laconically, employing such royal titles as 'the governor of Enlil' (*šakin* ^{d}*Enlil*), 'the viceroy of Aššur' (*iššiʾak*/*iššâk* ^{d}*Aššur*), and less frequently, 'the beloved' (*narāmu*) and 'the favorite' (*migru*) of a god" ("Literature," 465).

84 Machinist, "Literature," 465. Machinist notes several other features which point in this direction: the king is "given birth by the gods" (line 17), "created out of divine material" (line 16), "raised up by Enlil himself" (line 20), and "proclaimed as the image of the principle director of the pantheon, Enlil" (line 16), which, according to Machinist, "is supposed, in some way, to suggest, and participate in, the presence of his divine guardian, Enlil" ("Kingship," 162).

85 Machinist, "Kingship," 163.

86 Text and translation in Parpola, *LAS* no. 125, pp. 98 f.

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> world, is the very image (*ṣalmu*) of the Sun god. He (should) keep in the dark for only half a day![87]

Despite the ambiguity of the analogy, Curtis states that "[i]t seems certain that the author of the letter is establishing an analogy between the king and the sun god in order to try and convince the king to break his fast."[88]

The final example[89] comes from about the same time period and from another scholar, Ašaridu. In a report discussing ominous astral phenomena, Ašaridu calls the king of Assyria *ṣalam Marduk:*

> O King of the world, you are the image (*ṣalmu*) of Marduk; we experience the anger of the king, our lord, when you are angry with your servants but we (also) see the beneficence of the king.[90]

Curtis notes that this section of the report appears unrelated to the omen report and functions as something like a postscript that describes "the dependence of the scholars on royal whim."[91] The comparison, therefore, appears to relate the changeable moods of the king and their consequences to the changeable moods of the deity.[92]

Although the concept of a divine king has not normally been associated with Mesopotamia, it is occasionally found. There is some evidence of divinized rulers in Mesopotamia between 2300 and 1500 BCE.[93] The evidence for the "laying claim to divinity" is in the writing of their names with the divine determinative and the establishment of cults devoted to them.[94] Although Frank-

87 Text and translation in Parpola, *LAS* no. 143, pp. 112 – 113. L. Waterman, however, translates the passage somewhat differently: "Whoever laments for Shamash, the king of the gods, laments a day and a night and two days additional. The king, the lord of the lands, is the very image of Shamash. Is it (only) one half day you are sad?" (*Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire* [4 vols.; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1930], 1:7; cf. *CAD* A/1 104).

88 Curtis, "Man," 82; cf. Machinist, "Kingship," 172.

89 There is, perhaps, another example. In an unattributed letter concerning the performance of sacrifices, S. Cole and P. Machinist reconstruct the following: "[The king, my lord], is the [ima]ge of Marduk. The word of [the king], my lord, [is] just as [final] as that of the gods. […] the flesh of the gods, Šamaš" (*Letters from Priests to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal* [SAS 13; Helsinki: Helsinki University, 1998], no. 46, lines 11 – 13, p. 43). If the reconstruction is correct, the comparison seems to be the authority of the king's word to that of the gods.

90 Text and translation in Curtis, "Man," 84; cf. R. C. Thompson, *The Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon* (2 vols.; London: Luzac, 1900), vol. 1, plate 49, vol 2, lxii and 58.

91 Curtis, "Man," 84, following A. L. Oppenheim, "Divinization and Celestial Observation in the Last Assyrian Empire," *Cent* 14 (1969), 116.

92 Cf. Curtis, "Man," 85.

93 H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1948), 224.

94 Frankfort, *Kingship*, 224 – 6; Winter, "Touched by the Gods: Visual Evidence for the Divine Status of Rulers in the Ancient Near East," in N. Brisch (ed.), *Religion and Power: Divine*

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fort is not convinced that the phenomenon is enough to determine whether these kings were viewed as divine,[95] Curtis, among others, reasonably concludes that, "[i]t is difficult to escape the conclusion that the writing of the name with the divine determinative, the cult dedicated to the king and the royal hymns did involve some sort of divine status for these kings…"[96]

Such explicit statements regarding the divine nature of the king in Mesopotamia are not commonplace. However, according to one recent study,

> [I]f one distinguishes [] the sacred inscribed within notions of rule—that is, sacral kingship—from the explicit ascription of divinity to the ruler—that is, divine kingship—then the Mesopotamian ruler was *never not* accorded special status sanctioned by the gods.[97]

According to this viewpoint, the very nature of kingship in Mesopotamia, which was thought to have originated with the gods,[98] meant that the king constantly participated in a divine role. The nature of the office as the state's single and ultimate governor, as the representative of the people to the god, and as the representative of the god to the people ensured the integration between the king's secular and divine status.[99] This integration is best seen in the monarch's selection, described as a selection from among the people (making the king, therefore, by nature, one of the people) but often selected by the state's patron deity (and thereby causing the king to occupy a unique status among the people).[100] Speiser, likewise, argues that the kings understood themselves to be working on behalf of the gods and thus the "egocentrism" of their annals amounts to more than "mere conceit," since "[t]he missions recorded were the

Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2008), 76–79; W. W. Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles* (New Haven: AOS, 1957), 56–57; Curtis, "Man," 155–6.

95 Frankfort, *Kingship*, 299.

96 Curtis, "Man," 156.

97 Winter, "Touched," 75.

98 J. Klein, "Sumerian Kingship and the Gods," in G. M. Beckman and T. J. Lewis (eds.), *Text, Artifact, and Image* (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006), 115; Machinist, "Kingship," 188.

99 Winter argues that, "[f]rom earliest attestations, (the king) participated in and was touched by the divine, and so occupied a space, if not co-terminous with that of a god, then at least that of an intermediary between god and man" ("Touched," 75). In this essay, Winter examines a number of Mesopotamian monuments/inscriptions of rulers to demonstrate that, explicit assertion aside, these rulers "partook of some attributes and qualities shared with/ascribed to the gods" (88). For textual evidence relating to Assyrian kingship, see Machinist, "Kingship," 152–188.

100 J. N. Postgate, "Royal Ideology and State Administration in Sumer and Akkad," in *CANE* 1:396–7.

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god's missions" and "[t]hey could not be undertaken except with divine sanction as signified by the omens."[101]

Machinist further demonstrates that the language and themes relating kingship and divinity found in the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I are also found "directly or indirectly in subsequent reigns."[102] Thus, the proclamation of "global sovereignty" seen in such titles as "king of the four quarters" (*šar kibrāt erbette/arba'i*) is found in numerous examples in Middle and Neo-Assyrian royal proclamations, typically connected with the gods who have granted such status to the king.[103] Likewise, the imagery of Tukulti-Ninurta's divine birth and nurturing occurs in "a number of later royal texts, scattered over different types that include annals, prophecies, and hymns to deities."[104] For example, Tukulti-Ninurta II (890 – 884 BCE) claims,

> (the gods) who faithfully [noticed me(?)] in my mother's womb
> altered my features to lordly features.[105]

And the Hymn from Aššurbanipal to the Ištars of Nineveh and Arbela states that,

> I knew no (human) father or mother; I grew up on the knees of my god-
> -desses (=Ištar of Nineveh and Ištar of Arbela).
> The great gods brought me up like a baby.
>
> The Lady of Nineveh, the mother who bore me,
> granted me kingship without equal.
> The Lady of Arbela, who created me, ordered (for me) everlasting life.[106]

Further, the description of Tukulti-Ninurta's divine "radiance" or "effulgence," using the related terminology *melammu, namurratu, puluḫtu*, etc., is also picked up in later royal inscriptions. For example, the annals of Tiglath-pileser I claim that the king's "radiance (*melammu*) overwhelms the regions."[107] As we have seen, the characteristic of being "radiant" is more often associated with the gods and their images. Here it becomes a characteristic of kingship and, according to the annals of Adad-nirari II (911 – 891 BCE), is transferred by the gods to the king:

101 E. A. Speiser, "Ancient Mesopotamia," in *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East* (ed. R. C. Dentan; New Haven: Yale University, 1955), 66 – 67.
102 For this and the following, see Machinist, "Kingship," 165 – 88.
103 Machinist, "Kingship," 165. For examples, see M.-J. Seux, *Epithètes Royales Akkadiennes et Sumériennes* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1967), 313 f.
104 Machinist, "Kingship," 166.
105 Text and translation in Machinist, "Kingship," 166.
106 Text and translation in Machinist, "Kingship," 167. Machinist lists further examples on pp. 166 – 7; cf. n.89, above ("flesh of the gods, Šamaš").
107 Machinist, "Kingship," 169. For further examples, see *CAD* M/2 11 f.

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> After the great gods had decreed (my) destiny, had put into my hands the scepter for shepherding the people, had raised me in front of crowned kings, (and) had put on my head the radiance (*melammu*) of kingship…[108]

Finally, as we have seen, the description of Tukulti-Ninurta as the "image of god" is found in several later cases, although without the further emphasis on divine birth, material, and nurture which one finds in the Epic.[109] For many, this epithet is merely functional in nature. Thus, the king is the image of god in that he acts, or functions, like the deity. This conclusion has some legitimacy, since two of the cases appear to compare an attribute of the king to that of the god. In one case the mercy of the king in granting Adad-šumu-uṣur's request is compared to the mercy of Bēl and, in another, Ašaridu compares the changing moods of the king and their consequences to that of the gods.[110] However, this conclusion appears too simplistic. As Curtis notes,

> In one case the reverse seems to be the case. The king acts in a certain way – or should act in a certain way – because he is the image of god. This seems to be the point that is made in the letter in which Adad-šumu- uṣur tried to convince the king to break his fast. His argument proceeds along the lines that because the king is the image of Šamaš he should act like Šamaš in a particular respect.[111]

Further, it is plausible that the somewhat exceptional case of Tukulti-Ninurta was influenced by the conceptualization of the divine cult statue, which, as we have seen, did not merely *mimic* the god, but contained/manifested the real presence of the deity. For the sake of this argument, it is significant to note that the author of two of the above texts was an *āšipu* priest (Adad-šumu-uṣur),[112] since *āšipu* priests well understood the function of images in substitution rituals and were the officials who conducted the *mīs pî* ritual.[113] This connection becomes somewhat more significant when coupled with the fact that the only reference to a non-royal person as the "image of god" is applied to an *āšipu* priest.

108 Text and translation in Machinist, "Kingship," 170.

109 This should not be surprising given the difference in genre between an epic and a letter. Note, however, Cole and Machinist's reconstruction that contains the expression "image of Marduk" and "flesh of the gods, Šamaš" (above, n.89).

110 Curtis, "Man," 163; cf. Parpola, *LAS* 2:112.

111 Curtis, "Man," 163 – 4.

112 Adad-šumu-uṣur is identified as an *ašipu* priest by Parpola, *LAS* 2:xviii; cf. *LAS* 223: "As regards what the king, my lord, said: '[Whi]ch exorcists are with you?", there are (only) Nabû-lē'ûtu, his son and I. At present Adad-šumu-uṣur comes to us, sees our work and instructs us…" Curtis, likewise, notes that it is possible that all the above texts (bar Tukulti-Ninurta) may be tied together that way, since Ašaridu's title is not mentioned in the extant texts (Curtis, "Man," 86).

113 Berlejung, *Theologie*, 185 – 88, 90.

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2.3.2 Priest as Image

The text that refers to an *āšipu* priest as the "image of god" is from the incantation series *bīt mēseri.*[114] The passage in question reads (line 226):

> *šiptum šipat Marduk;*
> *āšipu ṣalam Marduk.*
> The conjuration (recited) is the conjuration of Marduk;
> The conjurer is the very image of Marduk.[115]

The greater context of this passage involves an incantation to remove illness from a person and, importantly, designates "a variety of figurines" (many referred to by the Akk. *ṣalmu*), including "two figures of the guardians, Ea and Marduk, that were placed in the gate, on the right and on the left…"[116] The passage continues with the instruction to recite a specific incantation for the ill person. These words were not mere posturing, but touched on the very real need for divine power in order to assure the success of the incantation. E. Ritter argues that the *āšipu* priests derived their authority and power for incantations from the gods themselves, so that they "speak[] their words in [the gods'] name."[117] Curtis, likewise, comments that the figures of Ea and Marduk were not "aesthetic in function but were thought to be magically effective…in such a way as to bring about an effective cure" and, further, "[i]t seems likely that the *āšipu* priest is here identified as the same figure of Marduk that was earlier placed by the gate."[118] Thus the priest, at least temporarily, becomes the image of the deity manifesting his presence and power.[119]

Although there is nothing as elaborate as the *mīs pî* ritual in this prelude to the

114 On these texts, see G. Meier, "Die Zweite Tafel der Serie *Bīt Mēseri*," *AfO* 14 (1941 – 44), 139 – 53; R. Borger, "Die Beschwörungsserie *Bīt Mēseri* und die Himmelfahrt Henochs," *JNES* 33 (1974), 187 – 96; Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 135 – 6; Kutsko, *Between*, 59 – 60; Berlejung, *Theologie*, 178 f; Curtis, "Man," 85, 161 – 3. The extant texts are from Assurbanipal's library, but many of the linguistic features and material appear to be older than the neo-Assyrian period.

115 Translation as rendered in *CAD* Ṣ 85.

116 Curtis, "Man," 85. The description and placement of these figurines is found in lines 168 – 82.

117 E. K. Ritter, "Magical-Expert (=ĀŠIPU) and Physician (=ASÛ) Notes on Two Complementary Professions in Babylonian Medicine," in *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (eds. H. G. Güterbock and T. Jacobsen; AS 16; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1965), 321.

118 Curtis, "Man," 161.

119 Cf. Hehn's observation: "im Beschwörungsritual des Ea-Marduk rezitiert der Priester die Beschwörungsformeln, als ob der Gott selbst spräche, und ganz unvermerkt tritt an die Stelle des Gottes der Priester" ("in the exorcism ritual of Ea-Marduk, the priest recited the incantation, as if god himself were speaking, and quite imperceptibly takes the place of the priests' god") ("Terminus," 47).

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incantation, Bahrani has observed that this construction contains literary characteristics that were important in magical incantations.[120] Likewise, N. Veldhuis argues that incantations contain literary characteristics like chiasm, parallelism, rhyme, and word play for reasons other than style.[121] Those literary characteristics that emphasize similarity and contrast rhetorically correspond to the principle of transfer by association, an essential aspect of substitution rituals.[122] Veldhuis recognizes that the incantation plays an important role in these complex rituals:

> If we regard the incantation as one element within this multi-faceted symbolism, the first thing that stands out is the homology between the use of materia magica and the use of language in the poetic function. The transfer of attributes from the materia magica is based on similarity and contrast. Similarity and contrast are the two basic mechanisms for the transfer of meaning in poetic language. Similarity and contrast provide the building blocks of metaphor and simile, but also engender features like rhyme and parallelism.[123]

The incantation, as the verbal aspect of the "multi-faceted" ritual, (re)emphasizes the non-verbal symbolic actions. "The structure of the ritual is one of redundancy and cross reference. The same attribute is transferred by various means, and the various attributes transferred are related by the symbolic system."[124] Consequently, Bahrani emphasizes tautology as part of the *āšipu* performative speech act, calling it a "repetitive performative utterance that transubstantiates the conjuration into one that Marduk himself is making in his manifestation as organic *ṣalmu* (body double)."[125]

Given the occurrences, it is likely that the *āšipu* priests were the group responsible for describing the king in terms of the divine image. Further, according to Curtis, it is possible "that the reference to the *āšipu* priest as the image of Marduk supplied the basis for describing the king…as the image of the god."[126] If so, then we would certainly go wrong in thinking that the expression

120 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 135 – 6.

121 N. Veldhuis, "The Poetry of Magic," in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (eds. T. Abusch and K. van der Toorn; Groningen: STYX, 1999), 35 – 48. See also in this volume, S. Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells: Language and Structure in Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity," 173 – 96. The relationship between rhetoric and magic has been recognized for a long time. Veldhuis notes the work of Gorgias (fifth century BCE) in this regard ("Poetry," 39).

122 Cf. Bottéro, *Mesopotamia*, 142.

123 Veldhuis, "Poetry," 41.

124 Veldhuis, "Poetry," 41.

125 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 136.

126 Curtis, "Man," 167. According to Machinist, "one of the roles of the Assyrian king is as chief priest of the realm" ("Kingship," 156). For the function of the Assyrian king as a priest in various rituals, see U. Magen, *Assyrische Königsdarstellungen-Aspekte der Herrschaft*

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only reflected the functional aspect of kingship, since the *āšipu* would not have been ignorant of (nor flippant with) the conceptualization of "cult images and the rites by which they were animated with the life of the deity."[127]

It is therefore important that Bahrani connects the transformative utterance of the *āšipu* priest in the incantation with the description of the king as image, pointing out that the royal and ritual texts correspond in their use of "[t]he contiguous link formed by the use of the possessive construction" *ṣalam* DN.[128] Like the other literary constructions, even "the possessive construction is of the utmost importance in magical incantations."[129] The possessive construction, which works through extension ("rather than displacement"), like the repetition "transubstantiates the conjuration into one that Marduk himself is making." In other words, in both the *āšipu* incantation text as well as the description of the king as *ṣalam* DN, the literary characteristics function to link otherwise opposing elements with the name of the deity, somehow "transubstantiating" the one into the other, mirroring the intention of the consecration rituals applied to cultic statues.

Essential to these observations is the recognition that *ṣalmu* does not mean statue, relief, or sculpture – or, at least not the way we understand these terms.[130] The concept of "portrait" as a replica of the referent is inaccurate if used to explain *ṣalmu* since the *ṣalmu* is not a natural replica but a conventionally coded and culturally mediated representation. Winter suggests that the image is a material form, animated through ritual transformation, "not standing for but actually manifesting the presence of the subject represented."[131] Winter calls these transformative rituals "rites of constitution," since "without the performance…the object would not be what it has been designed to be."[132] Similarly, Bahrani suggests that the image in ancient Mesopotamia should not be confused with modern conceptions of portraiture:

> The reason for steering away from the word portrait when discussing *ṣalmu* should…be in the implied separation between sitter and portrait, inherent in its use. The portrait is a copy of the real person (whether one thinks of it as encoded or pure).

(Mainz am Rhein: Zabern, 1986), 65–91; cf. Berjelung, *Theologie*, 187 n.992; Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 11.

127 Curtis, "Man," 167.

128 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 136.

129 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 135, 142–43.

130 Cf. Winter, "Idols," 36 n.5; *idem*, "Art in Empire: The Royal Image and the Visual Dimensions of Assyrian Ideology," in *Assyria 1995* (ed. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting; Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1997), 364–65; Bahrani, "Assault," 378–9; *idem*, *Graven Image*, 121–48.

131 Winter, "Idols," 14.

132 Winter, "Idols," 17.

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> *Ṣalmu*, on the other hand, has the potential of becoming an entity in its own right, a being rather than a copy of a being.[133]

For Bahrani, *ṣalmu* is not an objective representation of reality; it relates to the object as an extension and manifestation of divine presence. Bringing all these observations to bear on the interpretation of the two texts above, Bahrani translates these constructions as "The king (is) the manifestation/substitute of Marduk" and "The conjuration (is) Marduk's conjuration; The conjurer (is) Marduk's presence /manifestation/substitute."[134] Thus, Bahrani sees a parallel function for the incantation of the priest and the description of the king as Marduk's *ṣalmu:*

> The king speaks with the words of the god during the ritual in exactly the same way as any other conjurer so we cannot describe this as a unique privilege of kingship…A statement such as *šarrum ṣalam Marduk* …uses the king as a momentary substitute, as an organic body double, for the god and others are known to have fulfilled this function also.[135]

The performative utterance allows both the priest and the king access to the power necessary for the successful completion of the task at hand. Becoming the *ṣalmu* of the deity, in these cases, concerns the presence of the deity and the power that accompanies that presence.

2.4 Conclusion

What has become clear in the preceding study is that the "image" in ancient Mesopotamia should not be conceptualized as a mere statue or monument, since modern conceptions of portraiture are too often attached to those readings. *Ṣalmu* is not a replica but is more like a repetition or an extension of the referent's very presence, conventionally and arbitrarily motivated by means of a rite of constitution, or transformation, which includes, among other things, the name written and/or uttered. After the transformational ritual, the separation between the image and the referent is not at all apparent.

This type of conceptualization, then, explains the feeding, bathing, and general care given to the images (whether they represented humans or gods) and

133 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 124 – 5. Bahrani explains, "…rather than being a copy of something in reality, the image itself was seen as a real thing. It was not considered to resemble an original reality that was present elsewhere but to contain that reality in itself. Therefore, instead of being a means of signifying an original real thing, it was seen as ontologically equivalent to it, existing in the same register of reality" (*Graven Image*, 127).

134 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 135, 142.

135 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 143. See also above, n.126.

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the steps taken to ensure their protection. Statues could be captured and the referent judged and punished by means of them. Images of the gods could be abducted and returned, all the while providing real benefit for the land in which they dwelled and, conversely, causing detriment to the land from which they were taken.

When humans are used as images, this concept is not radically changed. Certainly there is a functional component to the concept: the person is the image in that he or she functions in ways similar to the referent. This can be seen in Adad-šumu-uṣur's comparison of the king's mercy and Ašaridu's comparison of the king's moods with those of the gods. Likewise, it is the case that in the immediate context of the example taken from the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta the king is "the eternal image of Enlil" in that he is "attentive to the voice of the people." Yet this functional component should not be thought to exhaust the complexities inherent in the concept. Of the five, perhaps six,[136] references to a human as "image of god," one appears to be modeled on the conceptualization of divine statues (Tukulti-Ninurta) and three, perhaps four, are issued from the mouth of an *āšipu* priest.[137] Indeed, found in this latter category is an *āšipu* incantation, which some believe supplied the basis for the description of the king as "image," since he could also function like a priest in certain rituals and was considered a representative of the god by the nature of his very office.

136 The sixth would be the reconstructed letter in Cole and Machinist, *Letters*, no. 46, lines 11 – 13, p. 43 (above, n.89).

137 The example from Cole and Machinist might also fit in this category as it concerns the proper performance of sacrifices.

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3. Iconic Israel: Divine Representation, Idol Polemics, and the Awareness of the Relationship between Image and Presence in the Hebrew Bible

3.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, we documented the belief in ancient Mesopotamia that material objects could manifest the presence of deity. In the following chapters, we will investigate the possibility that ancient Israel likewise shared this belief. Despite the polemical tone of the biblical authors, it is clear that at various points in its existence, Israel participated in worship that included material objects designed to manifest deity. Interestingly, even the later polemics against such cultic concepts demonstrate Israel's immersion in this type of rhetoric and belief. As we have seen, the ancient Mesopotamians went to great ritual efforts to achieve this phenomenon. So too did Israel go to great efforts to deconstruct these very rituals. Both Israel and Mesopotamia recognized the inherent weakness in the system: how could the divine inhabit, or be made present by, a human-made object?

3.2 Representation in the Israelite Cult

Research into the Pentateuch has made clear that the religious conceptions promulgated by these five books took final shape only in the post-exilic period and were heavily influenced by the religious reforms of the late pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic periods.[1] Thus, the theological conception that "the time of

1 A post-exilic dating for the final form of the Pentateuch has been largely accepted since the work of J. Wellhausen. More recently, this dating has been bolstered by the so-called "Persian imperial authorization" (*persische Reichsauthorisation*) theory. The theory rests on the assumption that external factors must have had a role in the composition of the Pentateuch (especially the combination of the different perspectives found in the Deuteronomistic and Priestly material) and that such an external trigger can be found in the authorization of local norms by the Persian authorities. See, e. g., Blum, *Studien*, 333 – 60; P. Frei, "Zentralgewalt und Lokalautonomie im Achämenidenreich," in *Reichsidee und Reichsorganisation im Perserreich*

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Israel's salvation was in the wilderness period, and that with the settlement in Canaan apostasy from Yahweh began which finally led to the exile" was only formulated hundreds of years after the supposed fact.[2] Constructing an ideal period before the settlement and state served well the purposes of the later religious and political reform movements to make illicit some of the cultic, cultural, and political features of early Israel.[3]

One of the most important aspects of the religious reforms that concretized itself in the exilic and post-exilic period is the prohibition against images. The growing consensus on the explicit formulation against images (the so-called *Bilderverbot*, e. g., Ex 20:4 – 6; Deut 5:8 – 10; Ex 20 – 23; 34:17; Lev 19:4; 26:1; cf. Deut 27:15) is that they are relatively late,[4] and its beginnings are perceived only in the late pre-exilic period with Hosea and the Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic reform movement. According to Albertz,

> Virtually everything that Hosea dismisses as Baal worship, the cultic high places (4:13 ff.; 10:8), the massebas (3:4; 10:1 f.), the oracular trees (4:12), the divine images (4:17; 8:4b; 1:2), the bull image of Bethel (8:5 f.; 10:5; 13:2) indeed even plum cakes (3:1; cf. II Sam 6:19) and the slashings as signs of lament (7:14), had been an uncriticized ingredient of the cult of Yahweh for centuries.[5]

(eds. P. Frei and K. Kloch; OBO 55; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 5 – 131; R. Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 466 – 71. For a review of recent criticisms, as well as a reasonable defense, see K. Schmid, "The Persian Imperial Authorization as a Historical Problem and as a Biblical Construct: A Plea for Distinctions in the Current Debate," in *The Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance* (eds. G. Knoppers and B. Levinson; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 23 – 38.

2 R. Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (trans. J. Bowden; 2 vols.; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 23, 466 ff.

3 Albertz, *History*, 24.

4 See, e. g., O. Keel, *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst* (SBS 84/86; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1975), 37 – 45; Albertz, *History*, 64; T. Mettinger, "The Veto on Images and the Aniconic God in Ancient Israel," in *Religious Symbols and Their Functions* (ed. H. Biezais; SIDA 10; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1979), 22 – 5; *idem*, "Israelite Aniconism: Developments and Origins," in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient near East* (ed. K. van der Toorn; CBET 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 175 – 8; F.-L. Hossfeld, *Der Dekalog: Seine späten Fassungen, die originale Komposition und seine Vorstufen* (OBO 45; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 268 – 73; C. Dohmen, *Das Bilderverbot: Seine Entstehung und seine Entwicklung im Alten Testament* (BBB 62; Bonn: Athenäum, 1985), 237 – 77; S. Schroer, *In Israel gab es Bilder: Nachrichten von darstellender Kunst im Alten Testament* (OBO 74; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 12 – 16.

5 Albertz, *History* 173. Albertz is not alone in his opinion that in Hosea we find the beginning of the "YHWH alone" movement as well as the bases for both the prohibition against foreign gods (*Fremdgötterverbot*) and cult images (*Bilderverbot*). See, e. g., C. Dohmen, *Bilderverbot*, 258 – 261, 265, 296 – 297; M. Weippert, *Jahwe und die anderen Götter: Studien zur Religionsgeschichte des antiken Israel in ihrem syrisch-palästinischen Kontext* (FAT 18; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 21; B. Lang, "Die Jahwe-allein-Bewegung," in *Der einzige Gott: Die*

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This is not to say, however, that the early YHWH cult did not have "aniconic tendencies." In fact, many scholars still believe that the YHWH cult was probably, at least in the beginning, "de facto aniconic."[6] However, there is no consensus on the reasons for such a practice.[7] C. Dohmen, for instance, proposes that the origins of the image ban polemics can be sought in pre-monarchical cult commands that only prohibited forms of worship alien to the Israelites' own cultic traditions.[8] He finds the beginnings of the prohibition in a hypothetical form of Exodus 20:23b + 24a: אלהי כסף ואלהי זהב לא תעשׂו לך מזבח אדמה תעשׂה לי ("Gods of silver and gods of gold you shall not make for yourself; an altar of earth you shall make for me").[9] Dohmen suggests that the original combination of the prohibitive ("Gods of silver and gold you shall not make for yourself") and the injunctive ("an altar of earth you shall make for me") clarifies the purpose of the command: "Kultbilder soll es nicht geben, es sollen aber (stattdessen)

Geburt des biblischen Monotheismus (ed. B. Lang; Munich: Kösel, 1981), 63; M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, *"Yahwe und seine Aschera": Anthropomorphisches Kultbild in Mesopotamien, Ugarit, und Israel* (Münster: Ugarit, 1992), 89–90; F.-L. Hossfeld, *Dekalog*, 270–273. Note, however, M. Nissinen, who sees in these passages the work of later, Deuteronomistic editors (*Prophetie, Redaktion und Fortschreibung im Hoseabuch : Studien zum Werdegang eines Prophetenbuches im Lichte von Hos 4 und 11* [AOAT 231; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991], 159, 161–163, 165–166, 317–318).

6 See, e.g., M. Dick, "Prophetic Parodies of Making the Cult Image," in *Born in Heaven Made on Earth* (ed. M. Dick; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 4–5; Albertz, *History*, 64; Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 195. Mettinger makes a distinction between "de facto" and "programmatic" aniconism: "…we may say that (a) the late explicit ban on images is a *programmatic* formulation and we may reckon with (b) the existence, prior to that, of a much older *de facto tradition* of aniconism in which aniconism was perhaps a conventional observance but not the subject of theological reflection and hardly linked with iconophobia or iconoclasm" (*No Graven Image*, 18). Thus, for Mettinger, a "de facto" aniconic tradition would be one where there is "an indifference to icons," "a mere absence of images," and/or "tolerant aniconism," while a programmatic aniconic tradition would be one where there is a conscious "repudiation of images," "iconophobia," and/or "iconoclasm." Obviously, in Mettinger's system, those texts that explicitly forbid the making/worshipping of images would belong to the latter.

7 Albertz, for instance, proposes that one possible reason lies in the "extreme conditions of the wilderness" where "there was probably neither the material for such an image nor a cult in which it could be used" (*History*, 64). For a review of other theories, see R. S. Hendel, "Social Origins of the Aniconic Tradition in Early Israel," *CBQ* 50 (1988), 367–72; K.-H. Bernhardt, *Gott und Bild* (Berlin, 1956), 69–106; Dietrich and Loretz, *Jahwe*, 106–107. Although Mettinger (*No Graven Image*) has recently attempted to ground the origins of aniconism in the West Semitic custom of standing stone worship, he fails to provide any reason for such an explanation.

8 Dohmen, *Bilderverbot.*

9 Dohmen's reconstruction has, however, been challenged. For example, Albertz challenges Dohmen's early date for the Book of the Covenant, which he believes is from the eighth century BCE (*History*, 265 n.129), and Mettinger takes these verses as the result of a Deuteronomistic redaction of the Covenant Code (*No Graven Image*, 138).

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Schlachtopfer mit Blutriten stattfinden."[10] In this way, Dohmen locates Israel's aniconic tradition in the conservative reactions of a "nomadic"[11] rural population attempting to preserve their form(s) of worship.[12]

Nevertheless, as the expanding prohibitions demonstrate, cultic images were prevalent in the early Israelite cult.[13] Indeed, even YHWH was eventually worshipped by means customary to the cultivated land of Palestine.[14] The traditional assumption that YHWH worship was always based on an aniconic cult is currently being undermined by a number of recent studies, both textual and archaeological.[15] Scholars point to the positive evidence in the biblical corpus of theriomorphic images in pre-exilic Israel, such as the presence of Nehushtan in the Jerusalem temple (2 Kgs 18:4)[16] and the bull calf at Bethel that represented YHWH and was meant to function as a legitimate alternative to the Jerusalem cult (1 Kgs 12:28 ff.).[17] Further, the biblical attestation of an image of Asherah in

10 "There shall be no cult images, instead sacrifices and blood rituals shall take place" (Dohmen, *Bilderverbot*, 238).

11 Dohmen places the emergence of this command in the ninth century BCE. Even if he is correct (see above, n.190), the designation "nomadism" is surely unsuitable to such a milieu. Cf. the critique of Brueggemann: "…since the work of Gottwald, it is problematic to use such terms…Sociologically, it is necessary to speak of peasants or semi-nomads at best" (review of C. Dohmen, *Das Bilderverbot: Seine Entstehung und Entwicklung im Alten Testament*, *JBL* 106 [1987], 314 – 315).

12 Cf. Dick, "Prophetic," 4 – 5. Many recent arguments for Israel's aniconic tradition have focused on the cultural/social distinction between non-urban and urban societies, see, e. g., Albertz, *History*, 64; Hendel, "Social Origins," 365 – 82; J. Kennedy, "The Social Background of Early Israel's Rejection of Cultic Images," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 17 (1987), 138 – 44.

13 "Why should iconolatrous practices be so emphatically rejected if they were not considered a real danger (or a viable alternative depending on one's viewpoint) to aniconism by at least some members of Judahite society? Moreover, the terminological variations on the 'image ban' texts would appear to be unnecessarily sophisticated did they not reflect real knowledge about real statuary…" (C. Uehlinger, "Arad, Qitmīt – Judahite Aniconism vs. Edomite Cult?: Questioning the Evidence," in *Text, Artifact, and Image* [eds. G. M. Beckman and T. J. Lewis; BJS 346; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006], 84; cf. H. Niehr, "In Search of YHWH's Cult Statue in The First Temple," in *The Image and the Book* [ed. K. van der Toorn; CBET 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1997], 73).

14 Albertz, *History*, 64; Schroer, *Bilder*, 67 – 117, esp. 81 – 103.

15 See, e. g., Dietrich and Loretz, *Jahwe*; B. B. Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition: On Reading Images and Viewing Texts," in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms* (ed. D. Edelman; CBET 13; Kampen: Pharos, 1995), 75 – 105; C. Uehlinger, "Israelite Aniconism in Context," *Bib* 77 (1996), 540 – 9; *idem*, "Arad," 80 – 114; *idem*, "Anthropomorphic Cult Statuary in Iron Age Palestine and the Search for Yahweh's Cult Images," in *The Image and the Book* (ed. K. van der Toorn; CBET 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 97 – 156. Also in this volume, see B. Becking, "Assyrian Evidence for Iconic Polytheism in Ancient Israel?," 157 – 72; Niehr, "Search," 73 – 95.

16 The origin, interpretation, and function of Nehushtan is difficult to discern, given its brief mention in the Hebrew Bible and the widely different, and often contradictory, connotations of the serpent in the ancient Near East. For discussion, see Schroer, *Bilder*, 104 – 15.

17 Cf. Cross, *CMHE*, 74 – 5; Schroer, *Bilder*, 84 – 104, 147; Dohmen, *Bilderverbot*, 147 – 153; O.

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the Jerusalem temple (1Kgs 15:14; 2Kgs 21:7; 2 Kgs 23:6), alongside the Khirbet el-Qom and Kuntillet ʻAjrud connections between YHWH and Asherah, lead some to ask whether or not YHWH would have been represented by an image. As H. Niehr observes, there are "a whole series of locutions, rituals and prophetic visions" within the biblical corpus that are "quite incomprehensible" if the presence of a divine statue is not assumed.[18] For instance, just as the statues of the gods and goddesses in the ancient Near East were provided nourishment, clothing, and jewelry by means of their images, so also YHWH is said to receive food (e.g, Ex 25:30; 35:13; 39:36; 1 Kgs 7:48), clothing (e.g. Ezek 16:8; Isa 63:1–3; Ps 60:10 // 108:10), and jewelry (e.g., Ex 24:10; Ezek 1:22, 26; 10:1). Moreover, formulae such as "seeing/seeking the face" of a deity, chiefly found in other Near Eastern literature to refer to a personal confrontation with the cult statue in the sanctuary,[19] are quite prominent in the Psalms (e.g., Ps 11:17; 17:15; cf. 42:3; 105:3). Several of these texts appear to reflect a similar conception.[20] For instance, many note that the parallelism of פנים (face) and תמונה (form) in Ps 17:15 (אני בצדק אחזה פניך אשׂבעה בהקיץ תמונתך) is best explained by assuming a divine statue of YHWH in the Jerusalem temple, especially given the "physical connotation of תמונה and its association with cultic images (e.g., Ex 20:4; Deut 4:16, 23, 25; 5:8)."[21] One may add to this observation the similar formulae that describe beholding certain attributes of YHWH, such as his כבוד (Ps 63:3; cf. 106:20).[22] In the minds of these scholars, the exilic and post-exilic authors have provided a

Keel and C. Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (trans. T. H. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 216–219. On the interpretation of the bull calves as cultic statues intended to manifest the presence of YHWH, rather than as pedestals upon which YHWH was imagined to stand invisibly, see below, chap. 4.2.2.

18 Niehr, "Search," 81.

19 Niehr, "Search," 83. There is, at least, a general agreement that such an expression had its origin in the personal confrontation with a divine image, see, e.g., F. Nötscher, *"Das Angesicht Gottes schaun" nach biblischer und babylonischer Auffassung* (Würzburg: Becker, 1924). C. L. Seow notes that similar expressions in the Hebrew Bible often imply the presence of "some kind of representation of YHWH's presence" ("Face," *DDD*, 609–610).

20 See, however, M. S. Smith, who explains such language as "metaphorical for experiencing the divine presence" ("'Seeing God' in the Psalms: The Background to the Beatific Vision in the Hebrew Bible," *CBQ* 50 [1988], 171–83). Likewise, Mettinger understands this type of imagery as "a sort of mental iconography," where "linguistic expressions…presuppose an anthropomorphic conception of God but not necessarily the existence of an anthropomorphic statue" ("Aniconism," 187).

21 S. Bunta, "Yhwh's Cultic Statue after 597/586 B.C.E.: A Linguistic and Theological Reinterpretation of Ezekiel 28:12," *CBQ* 69 (2007), 233 n.43. On this verse, Smith merely notes that both terms are "traditional words for divine presence" ("Seeing," 181). Niehr observes that most scholars "reject the most simple and most plausible explanation" of these passages because "the existence of a divine image in the First Temple is inconceivable" to them ("Search," 84).

22 Bunta, "Cultic Statue," 233–34. Niehr also adds the expressions, "to gaze on the loveliness of YHWH" (Ps 27:4), "to see the bounty of YHWH" (Ps 27:13), and "to see the god of gods in Zion" (Ps 84:8) ("Search," 84–5).

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completely misleading picture of the representation of YHWH in the first temple.

The traditional response to the aforementioned speculations remains valid, since it is true that "[t]here is no mention of any cult image of Yahweh in the biblical corpus or in Mesopotamian literature"; nor "are there [any] ritual texts describing its making and consecrating."[23] Yet, it is important to point out what exactly is being denied here. Most scholars admit that YHWH had, at certain times and places, some sort of representation in the cult.[24] Thus, the specific issue at hand is whether or not an anthropomorphic statue ever functioned as a cultic representation for YHWH. The current debate, then, appears to place a great deal of emphasis on the difference between a cult focused on an anthropomorphic statue and one centered on another type of representation. As we will see, however, such an emphasis may be somewhat misplaced, distinguishing only between the forms of the "dominant, central cultic symbol" and saying very little regarding the conceived function of that symbol.[25] In other words, whether or not YHWH had an anthropomorphic statue, while important, is not necessarily decisive when considering whether or not Israel shared the belief that cultic representations functioned to actualize, or make present, the god or goddess.

3.2.1 High Place Worship

Despite the late pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic reform movements that often present practices and beliefs associated with ancient Near Eastern cults as Canaanite and, therefore, beyond the bounds of legitimate YHWH worship, there is ample evidence that such practices and beliefs were not "foreign" to ancient Israel. "High place" (במה/במות) worship was a traditional feature of Israelite society (see, e. g., 1 Sam 9 f; 2 Sam 21:6, 9; 1 Kings 3:4)[26] and was not, at all

23 Lewis, "Syro-Palestinian," 104.

24 See, e. g., Lewis, who in the same article notes that the ark was a "representational emblem of the deity" and "a metonymic representation symbolizing [YHWH's] presence in procession" ("Syro-Palestinian," 96).

25 Cf. Uehlinger, "Aniconism," 543 – 7. Note also Mettinger' proviso that "[i]n the case of iconic representations a degree of resemblance between the symbol and its *significatum* may be assumed. This, however, is precisely the moot point, since we must at this point add the important proviso that our knowledge of the "theology of images" in the ancient Near East is still very incomplete" (*No Graven Image*, 22).

26 The precise nature and locations of these sites are often hidden from us, due to the penchant of the later biblical authors for designating all sanctuaries apart from Jerusalem as במות and the fact that precious few sites have been produced by archaeology. Albertz, however, is surely correct that this is "not just an invention of later theologians…[but] was the typical

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times and places, considered illicit but could function as a legitimate part of the YHWH cult. Thus, for example, E. Larocca-Pitts[27] concludes that the use of "high places" was acceptable prior to the construction of the temple at Jerusalem: "The only issue for Dtr was its insistence that the only acceptable site of YHWHistic worship, once the Temple was constructed, was the Temple itself. *bamōt* in and of themselves are neither legitimate nor illegitimate."[28] However, as I. Provan demonstrates, one can find a distinction in the Deuteronomistic judgment upon "high place" sanctuaries.[29] Some, to be sure, are condemned purely on the basis of the centralization of YHWH worship in Jerusalem (e. g., 1 Sam 9 – 10; 1 Kgs 3:1 – 4, etc.). Yet others incur harsher rebuke; they are viewed as foreign in nature and, therefore, as idolatrous places of worship (e. g., 2 Kgs 17:9 – 11). According to Provan, therefore, one can detect different layers of Deuteronomistic editing in the books of Kings that correspond to the editor's opinion on the YHWHistic or foreign nature of "high place" worship. While the former view is by far the most common, the latter is "detectable…both in (exilic) redactional additions…and in material towards the end of the books."[30] Thus, it appears that such worship was only considered "beyond the pale" after the centralization of worship in Jerusalem and the exilic interpretation of the exile.

According to both biblical and extra-biblical sources, "high place" worship would have consisted of a minimal amount of cultic equipment, including altars

sanctuary of the pre-state period…" (Albertz, *History*, 84). This type of sanctuary would fit the picture we have of early Israel's cultural and economic circumstances, needing a minimum of cultic appurtenances. Further, the presence of various local sanctuaries likewise fits the fact that YHWH was worshipped in different forms in different locations: YHWH Sabaoth in Shiloh (I Sam 1:3); YHWH in Hebron (2 Sam 15:7); YHWH of Samaria (Kuntillet 'Ajrud, Pithos n. 1); YHWH of Teman (Kuntillet 'Ajrud, Pithos n. 2 and 3), etc. On the cultural-sociological differences between the semi-nomadic and more conservative rural population and the urbanites, especially as it relates to the cult practice, see above, n.188 and 193. On the Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscriptions, see below and, among others, Z. Meshel, *Kuntillet Ajrud: A Religious Centre from the Time of the Judean Monarchy on the Border of Sinai* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1978); J. A. Emerton, "New Light on Israelite Religion: The Implications of the Inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud," *ZAW* 94 (1982), 2 – 20; J. Hadley, "Some Drawings and Inscriptions on Two Pithoi from Kuntillet 'Ajrud," *VT* 37 (1987), 180 – 213; *idem, The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2000); J. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (JSOT 265; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 49 – 52, 59 – 61.

27 *"Of Wood and Stone": The Significance of Israelite Cultic Items in the Bible and Its Early Interpreters* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001). The author analyzes a number of terms referring to cultic items that are connected with the open-air sanctuaries of early Israel: במות ("high places"), מצבות ("standing stones"), אשרים ("sacred trees/poles"), and מזבח ("altar").

28 Larocca-Pitts, *"Of Wood,"* 136, 158.

29 I. Provan, *Hezekiah and the Books of Kings* (BZAW 172; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988), 57 – 90. To be fair, Larocca-Pitts does realize that idolatrous "high place" sanctuaries incur the judgment of DtrH. Unfortunately, however, she does not discuss editorial layering in any depth, nor, for that matter, the likely dates of such editing.

30 Provan, *Hezekiah*, 90.

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(מזבחות), standing stones (מצבות), and stylized trees/poles (אשרים); the latter two being regarded as "symbols of divine presence."[31] Given the latter biblical polemic against such cultic "symbols," it comes as no surprise that many of the biblical sources have scant positive to say about the use of standing stones and stylized trees in the religious rituals of Israel.[32] Indeed, as Larocca-Pitts has demonstrated, the sources are unanimous in the antagonistic attitude toward the sacred trees[33] and are consistent in their condemnation of standing stones for explicitly cultic purposes.[34]

3.2.2 Standing Stones

In his 1995 monograph on Israelite aniconism, Mettinger demonstrates that cults centered on standing stones were important in a number of cultures throughout the West Semitic world, including Israel.[35] As noted above, the biblical sources seem to reserve positive judgment for those standing stones that appear to perform "non-cultic" functions. In 1969, C. Graesser distinguished four functions for stones based on the biblical text: 1) memorial stones, which marked the memory of a dead person (e. g., Gen 35:20; 2 Sam 18:18); 2) legal stones, which marked a legal relationship between two or more individuals (e. g., Gen 31:45 – 52; Ex 24:4; cf. Josh 24:26 – 27); 3) commemorative stones, which commemorated an event and called to mind the participants (whether divine or human) of that event in order to honor them (e. g., 1 Sam 15:12 [יד]; 1 Sam 7:12 [אבן העזר]); and 4) cultic stones, which marked "the sacred area where a deity

31 Albertz, *History*, 85.

32 Indeed, as Larroca-Pitts notes, DtrH's judgment on "high places," particularly of the northern ones, is overwhelmingly concerned with "the institutionalization of cultic statuary" (*"Of Wood,"* 67).

33 There are no exceptions to the antagonistic attitude toward the presence of אשרים in the Hebrew Bible. The word occurs forty times: Ex 34:13; Deut 7:5; 12:3; 16:21; Judg 3:7, 6:25, 26, 28, 30: 1 Kgs 14:15, 23, 15:13; 16:33; 18:19; 2 Kgs 13:6; 17:10, 16; 18:4; 21:3, 7; 23:4, 6, 7, 14, 15; 2 Chron 14:2; 15:16; 17:6; 19:3; 24:18; 31:1; 33:3, 19; 34:3, 4, 7; Isa 17:8; 27:9; Jer 17:2; Mic 5:13 (the latter two may be viewed as indirect). See Larocca-Pitts, *"Of Wood,"* 168 – 171.

34 The exceptions are found in the pre-priestly Patriarchal narratives (Larroca-Pitts' *Elohist* source and Ex 24) and First Isaiah (specifically, 19:19). See also, e. g., the helpful chart illustrating the various opinions in Larocca-Pitts, *"Of Wood,"* 210 – 211. She also notes that the condemnation of (cultic) מצבות is found in a number of sources whether they are described as specifically foreign in nature (Ex 34:14; Deut 7:5, 12:3, 16:22; Jer 43:1; Ezek 26:11) or even dedicated to YHWH (Deut 16:22; cf. Lev 26:1; Micah 5:12). Further disapproval is also found in DtrH's description of the syncretistic practices of Israel/Judah (1 Kgs 14:23; 2 Kgs 17:10; 18:4; 2 Chr 14:2; 31:1) and the subsequent destruction of such cultic items (2 Kgs 3:2; 10:26 – 27; 2 Kgs 23:14).

35 *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (CBOTS 42; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995).

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might be found" and the "exact point where the deity is cultically immanent."[36] However, the actual distinction between a "non-cultic" and "cultic" standing stone is difficult to maintain. Even Graesser himself notes the possibility of overlap in functions; many of these stones, according to Graesser, tended to function in such a way as to "enable" or "effect" the deity's presence.[37] Since Graesser's groundbreaking work, the trend has been to increasingly dispense with such distinctions. In a 1993 essay, for example, M. Hutter lists only two main categories: those standing stones serving cultic functions (*baityloi*) and those serving to mark the memory of the dead.[38] Yet, as Mettinger observes, even "the memorial function" should not be viewed apart from the cultic one, since the cult of the gods and the cult of ancestors in the West Semitic mortuary cults "seem to converge."[39] Similarly, E. Bloch-Smith argues that in all of Graesser's original four categories, "the stone signaled divine presence as witness or participant…In the case of the dead, erecting a memorial stone associated with divinity was an appropriate marker for the deceased called *elohim* and thus attributed divine status."[40]

Despite the paucity of positive attestations of overtly cultic standing stones in the biblical text, the information gleaned from comparative studies and the archaeology of ancient Palestine points toward their predominance. Mettinger's study, mentioned above, follows from the studies of U. Avner, who observes that 28 % of the 185 occurrences of standing stones in the ancient Near East are found inside or outside temples or shrines, while those found in many other locations are "characteristic of high places."[41] The cultic function of these stones is further confirmed by the fact that they are often found oriented to the east ("facing the

36 C. Graesser, "Standing Stones in Ancient Palestine," *BA* 35:2 (1972), 37.

37 Graesser, "Standing Stones," 37.

38 M. Hutter, "Kultstelen und Baityloi: Die Ausstrahlung eines syrischen religiösen Phänomens nach Kleinasien und Israel," in *Religionsgeschichtliche Beziehungen zwischen Kleinasien, Nordsyrien und dem Alten Testament* (eds. B. Janowski, K. Koch, et al.; OBO 129; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 87 – 108, esp., 103 – 106.

39 Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 32 – 33; cf. Hutter, "Kultstelen," 105 – 106. On the increasing probability of West Semitic cults of the dead see, T. J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit* (HSM 39; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989); E. Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs About the Dead* (JSOTSup 123, JSOT/ASOR 7; Sheffied: Sheffield Academic, 1992); O. Loretz, *Ugarit und die Bibel* (Darmstadt, 1990), 125 – 43; J. C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahvism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism* (BETL 91; Lueven, 1990), 229 – 55.

40 E. Bloch-Smith, "Will the Real Massebot Please Stand Up: Cases of Real and Mistakenly Identified Standing Stones in Ancient Israel," in *Text, Artifact, and Image* (eds. G. Beckmann and T. J. Lewis; BJS 346; Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006), 65. One could also mention here the biblical teraphim (תרפים), which, according to many scholars, were ancestor figurines used in divination. See, e. g., T. J. Lewis, "Divine Images and Aniconism in Ancient Israel," *JAOS* 118 (1998), 43; K. van der Toorn and T. J. Lewis, "תרפים," in *TWAT* 8:765 – 78.

41 U. Avner, "Ancient Cult Sites in the Negev and Sinai Deserts," *Tel Aviv* 11 (1984), 118; cf. Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 31.

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rising sun, which is believed to radiate life, fertility and strength"), in groups of the same number, especially pairs, triads and septets, which may be seen as similar to numbers of gods in the mythology and art of the ancient Near East, and "unhewed," or crude in nature, which may be understood in light of the biblical command for stones used as altars and in the construction of the temple (Ex 20:25; Deut 27:6; Josh 8:31; 1 Kgs 6:7).[42] Of primary importance is Mettinger's collection of Iron Age, Palestinian data.[43] Mettinger surveys many of the most important finds of standing stones from Iron Age Palestine and, although not all of his evidence is beyond dispute,[44] he does cite a number of cases where the cultic interpretation is dominant or near unanimous in the scholarly literature.[45] Thus, for instance, the cultic function of the standing stone(s) at Arad, a site of a Judahite administrative fortress with a temple (Strata XI – VII),[46] has garnered near unanimous agreement. The temple consisted of a square courtyard with an altar for burnt offerings, made of undressed fieldstones. Past the courtyard, proceeding westward, is a narrow broad room, flanked by two pillar bases, with benches along the western and, probably, southern walls. A raised *adyton* is situated at the back of the broadroom with two limestone altars found laid down on the second step of the staircase from the broadroom to the *adyton*.

42 Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 33; cf. Avner, "Cult Sites," 118 – 119; *idem*, "Ancient Agricultural Settlement and Religion in the Uvda Valley in Southern Israel," *BA* 53 (1990), 133.

43 On Iron Age Palestine, see pp. 143 – 168. Note also the discussion of standing stone cults in the Negev (pp. 168 – 174) and Bronze Age Palestine (pp. 175 – 191).

44 Bloch-Smith has recently re-examined a number of published standing stones in Iron Age Israel and suggested that the interpretation of "cultic" standing stones based primarily on "accompanying cultic assemblage" is a problematic one. Among those stones cited by Mettinger as "cultic" and by Bloch-Smith as "questionable" or "mistakenly identified" are Lachish (Locus 49); Beth Shemesh; Megiddo (2081, 1338, and 340); and Tell Ta'anach. See Bloch-Smith, "Will the Real," 64 – 79 (compare Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 143 – 166).

45 Those stones that both Mettinger and Bloch-Smith believe to be "cultic" are Arad (see below); Lachish (Locus 111 and 949); the "Bull Site"; Tel Dan (Area A); Shechem (Temple 1 and 2); and Hazor (Area B Str. XI). Again, compare Bloch-Smith, "Will the Real," 64 – 79 and Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 143 – 166, 178 – 181, 186 – 188.

46 Dating of the strata at Arad is debated. The dating of the original excavation team, Y. Aharoni and Z. Herzog, dates the strata from the late tenth through the seventh centuries BCE (Aharoni, "Excavations at Tel Arad: Preliminary Report on the Second Season, 1963," *IEJ* 17 [1967], 233 – 49; Z. Herzog, M. Aharoni et al., "The Israelite Fortress at Arad," *BASOR* 254 [1984], 1 – 34; cf. Z. Herzog, "The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad An Interim Report," *Tel Aviv* 29 [2002], 3 – 108, esp. 14, 41 – 47). On this timeline, it is possible that the altar was rendered obsolete during Hezekiah's reform (Str. VIII) and the destruction of the temple correlates with Josiah's reform (Str. VII). On the other hand, D. Ussishkin disputes this chronology, seeing the foundation of the temple only from the seventh century and its termination in the early sixth century ("The Date of the Judean Shrine at Arad," *IEJ* 38 [1988], 151, 155). Mettinger notes, however, that "whoever is right, the sanctuary at Arad is from Iron II, whether we date its construction earlier or later in this period" (Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 145).

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Lying in the *adyton* were found three standing stones. It appears that in the most recent stage of the temple there was only a single standing stone functioning as "a cultic symbol":

> The architectural niche [*adyton*] served to focus the worshippers' attention at the spot of the theophany, past and/or present. Erected in the niche, the stone functioned like an image, to house or embody the divine manifestation or actualize the presence of the deity.[47]

The place and function of the other two standing stones has incurred more debate. According to Mettinger, they either "served at the open high place that preceded the sanctuary (Str. XII) or functioned as divine representations in the *adyton* of the temple or had both these functions subsequently."[48] Similarly, Bloch-Smith suggests that they perhaps represent "one or two accompanying lesser deities"[49] and Avner believes that they may have represented a "divine family of two adult deities with a young god or goddess between them."[50]

Mettinger's analysis demonstrates the "probability of Palestinian masseboth cult in the time prior to the Deuteronomists."[51] In other words, ancient Israel, throughout the monarchical period, did participate in cultic rituals that included standing stones as the dominant, central cultic symbol. His conclusion that the predominance of such cults means that Israelite aniconism was therefore indigenous to the West Semitic world and provides the basis for the prohibition of images is, however, more difficult to support.[52] As Mettinger admits, the mere presence of cults centered on standing stones in no way guarantees the absence of cults centered on "iconic"[53] images. Thus, with regard to early West Semitic cults, he notes clear cases of iconic worship and the co-existence of these icons alongside standing stones with no discernable difference in function.[54] He dismisses such evidence, however, as "resulting from a fusion of a West Semitic

47 Bloch-Smith, "Will the Real," 78.

48 Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 148.

49 Bloch-Smith, "Will the Real," 78; cf. A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 497. Alternatively, given the ability of ancient Near Eastern deities to have multiple cultic representations, all three of the standing stones may have represented YHWH (cf. Sommer, *Bodies*, 51, 208 n.81).

50 U. Avner, "Mazzebot Sites in the Negev and Sinai and their Significance," in *Biblical Archaeology Today, 1990* (eds. A. Biran and J. Aviram; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), 179 n.36.

51 Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 143.

52 Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 197, 195, respectively. Mettinger has since admitted that the latter claim is an "overstatement" ("Aniconism," 200 n.111).

53 Defined by Mettinger as "anthropomorphic" or "theriomorphic" statuary.

54 For example, regarding Bronze Age Syria, Mettinger notes that, "[w]e find in Mari, Emar, Qatna and Ugarit a coexistence of stelae (in Ugarit with anthropomorphic representations in 14 out of 19 cases) *and* what one is inclined to take as cultic images in the round" (*No Graven Image*, 128).

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plain-stone tradition with the artistic traditions of Mesopotamia and Egypt with their anthropomorphic depictions."[55] In other words, he dissociates the juxtaposition due to what he feels is a contradiction of a "generally aniconic"[56] impression of early West Semitic cults.[57] Similarly, he recognizes that, in Mesopotamia, non-anthropomorphic representations could stand for a god and, functionally speaking, could take the place of an anthropomorphic representation, so that they were often used as "a mere substitute" for "the actual, anthropomorphic statue."[58] Yet, despite the growing evidence of anthropomorphic and theriomorphic cult statuary in Iron Age Palestine, he nowhere allows for this possibility to influence his discussion of Israelite aniconism. Instead, he discounts such evidence as owing to a *de facto* aniconic culture, which only tolerated such images.[59]

Thus, as mentioned above, it is difficult not to question the import of the distinction between aniconic and iconic representations when discussing cultic rituals, conceptualizations, and beliefs. Following B. Gladigow and C. S. Peirce, Mettinger defines an "iconic cult" as one where there is an "anthropomorphic or theriomorphic" representation of deity serving as the "dominant or central cultic symbol." Everything else, according to Mettinger, is then to be termed either "material aniconism" (e. g., "more or less unworked stones, pillars, or poles") or "empty space aniconism/sacred emptiness" (e. g., "the empty throne, the empty cultic chariot, the saddled horse without its rider, or the empty holy of holies"). However, the distinction between an "iconic" cult and one centered on standing stones ("material aniconism") is not at all clear.[60] These standing stones could function in much the same way as any other dominant, central cultic symbol, such as an anthropomorphic statue.

Biblical examples also indicate the possibility that stones could serve as substitutes. There is at least one biblical example of such a stone being anointed (Gen 28:18; 35:14). An act that likely has its origin in the care of cult statues.[61]

55 Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 128.
56 Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 195.
57 Cf. Uehlinger, "Aniconism," 545.
58 Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 47.
59 Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 135 – 137; *idem*, "Aniconism," 199 – 200. See also the similar critique in Uehlinger, "Aniconism," 545.
60 Cf. Uehlinger, "Aniconism," 545.
61 Uehlinger, "Aniconism," 544. As Sommer notes, the decision to pour oil on top of the stone "was neither random or unique. It recalls a Northwest Semitic ritual associated with sacred stelae" (Sommer, *Bodies*, 49). The ritual Sommer has in mind was part of the installation of the high priestess in the temple of Baal Hadad in Emar, where "fine oil" was poured "on the top of the *sikkānu* (stele) of Hebat" (the consort of Baal Hadad). For this text and translation, see D. Fleming, *The Installation of Baal's High Priestess at Emar* (HSM 42; Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 17, 52 (lines 34 f.); M. Dietrich et al., "Sikkanum 'Betyle'," *UF* 21 (1989), 134. On the term *skn* in Ugaritic and *sikkānum* in Akkadian to indicate a deified standing stone, see also

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Further, both Moses (Ex 24:4) and Joshua (Josh 4:20) set up twelve stones that were explicitly linked to the twelve tribes of Israel.[62] Similarly, the stone that Joshua set up at Shechem is notable in that it was apparently given powers akin to cultic statuary in Mesopotamia (Josh 24:27):

ויאמר יהושע אל־כל־העם הנה האבן הזאת תהיה־בנו לעדה
כי־היא שמעה את כל־אמרי יהוה

> Joshua said to all the people, "This stone will be a witness among us, because it has heard all the words of YHWH…"[63]

Along these same lines, we might also mention the מצבה set up at the conclusion of Jacob and Laban's covenant (Gen 31:13 – 52) as a "witness" (עד), "to watch that neither passes over the border to harm the other."[64] Further, in Isaiah 19:19, a מצבה is set up on the border between Israel and Egypt as a "sign" (אות) and "witness" (עד) to the presence of YHWH in Egypt (v. 20). Finally, texts such as Genesis 49:24 refer to God as a "rock" (אבן ישׂראל , Gen 49:24; הצור, Deut 32:4 [cf. vv. 30 f.]; סלעי, 2 Sam 22:2 – 3 [cf. Ps 18:3], etc.). On these latter epithets, I. Gruenwald notes that reading all of these terms as similes and, thus, divesting the texts of their "mythological content" is a mistake.[65] Instead, these references "may recall the notion of Yhwh's embodiment in stelae or betyls."[66]

The later Israelite authors did indeed view standing stones in ways little different than their concepts of other images. For example, Leviticus 26:1 places

K. van der Toorn, "Worshipping Stones: On the Deification of Cult Symbols," *JNSL* 23 (1997), 7 – 10; Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 116, 123 – 5, 130; Sommer, *Bodies*, 29. In this connection, see also J. Faur, who argues that the biblical term מסכה (found in phrases such as אלהי מסכה [Ex 34:17], עגל מסכה [Ex 32:4], and צלמי מסכתם [Num 33:52]) is derived from the root סכה "anoint with" or נסך "cultic libation" and, therefore, "refers to the anointing of the statue during the act of consecration…(or) to the libations made during the ritual of consecration" ("The Biblical Idea of Idolatry," *JQR* 69:1 [1978],12; cf. Sommer, *Bodies*, 207 n.72). Dohmen disputes this theory, arguing that the term refers to the manufacturing process of cultic statuary (see below, p. 123 n.201).

62 Whether these stones were meant to represent Israel's god or Israel itself is debatable. Sommer mentions the possibility that the stones represented YHWH: "If Yhwh could be present in one *massebah* or *'asherah* in Samaria and another in Hebron, why could Yhwh not be present in two or twelve of them in a single location?" (Sommer, *Bodies*, 51). On the use of multiple stelae dedicated to a single deity, see Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 98.

63 On the god Abnu, known from an Old Babylonian text, as well as Amorite and West Semitic names, see van der Toorn, "Worshipping," 10 – 11. Note also the sacrificial activity prompted by the "great stone" (אבן גדולה) and its description as a "witness" in 1 Sam 6:14 – 18 (cf. Judg 9:6).

64 LaRocca-Pitts, *"Of Wood,"* 213.

65 I. Gruenwald, "God as 'Stone/Rock': Myth, Idolatry, and Cultic Fetishism in Ancient Israel," *JR* 76 (1996), 428 – 49.

66 Sommer, *Bodies*, 51.

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standing stones in a list that otherwise contains terminology referring to divine images:

לא־תעשׂו לכם אלילם ופסל ומצבה לא־תקימו לכם ואבן משׂכית לא תתנו
בארצכם להשׁתחות עליה כי אני יהוה אלהיכם׃

> You shall not make for yourself idols (אלילם), or set up for yourselves a cultic image (פסל) or massebah (מצבה), and a figured stone (אבן משכית) you shall not place in your land to bow down to it, because I am the Lord your God.[67]

Likewise DtrH mentions standing stones that represent specific deities. On two occasions, we read that the standing stones of Baal (מצבת הבעל) were removed by Jehoram (2 Kgs 3:2) and Jehu (2 Kgs 10:26 – 27). The latter text places the stone in the temple of Baal (בית הבעל). As Lewis notes, although it is possible that the expression "*massebah* of Baal" may refer to "a pillar dedicated to Baal in thanks for his beneficence or to mark his theophany without necessarily denoting the actual cultic symbol,…this is improbable."[68] Thus, again, the actual difference between the types of cults that Mettinger deems "materially aniconic" and "iconic" may be largely one of semantics or form and say actually very little regarding the people's conceptualization of the actual representation itself.

Both the written and archaeological records indicate that early Israel certainly made use of standing stones in non-cultic as well as cultic rituals. However, as we have seen, whether one can separate these functions so neatly is questionable. Indeed, according to Bloch-Smith, in every known function "the stone signaled divine presence as witness or participant."[69] This conclusion is supported by the biblical record, which consistently maintains that standing stones were no better than other types of cultic images. Moreover, the archaeological records document the predominance of such stones and demonstrate that the presence of these stones in no way precludes the presence of iconic cults since both cultic representations could be present in the same place and time or, conversely, the

67 Cf. Mic 5:12: והכרתי פסיליך ומצבותיך מקרבך ולא־תשׁתחוה עוד למעשׂה ידיך
("And I will cut off your cultic images and your standing stones from your midst, and you shall not bow down to the work of your hands any longer").

68 Lewis, "Syro-Palestinian," 41. Compare also the remarks of M. S. Smith that standing stones "do not represent the deity per se, but mark the place of the deity's cultic presence" (*The Origins of Biblical Monotheism* [Oxford: Oxford University, 2001], 247 n.39). As we have seen, however, these stones were treated in ways no different from the treatment of the divine, anthropomorphic statues of Mesopotamia. As Sommer notes, these types of comments introduce a distinction without a difference: "The betyl housed the deity, which is to say that the deity was present in that particular object in a way that the deity was not present in other objects nearby" (*Bodies*, 192 n.126).

69 Bloch-Smith, "Will the Real," 65. Note, however, Lewis's caution, "[e]very group of standing stones does not necessarily document a pantheon; every *massebah* may not have represented a deity" ("Syro-Palestinian," 41).

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non-anthropomorphic representation could function as a "stand-in" for the anthropomorphic statue, of which there is an abundance of evidence in Iron Age Israel.[70] Even in the absence of such "iconic" representation, however, standing stones are treated and depicted in ways similar to the treatment of *ṣalmu* in Mesopotamia. Thus, there is no clear functional distinction between the conceptualization of standing stones and anthropomorphic statuary; both were thought to manifest or actualize the presence of the deity.

3.2.3 Asherah

Similar conclusions can be reached when considering the place and function of *asherim* (אשרים /אשרה) in the Israelite cult.[71] Although the biblical sources are unanimous in their condemnation of the use of such cultic representations, there are indications that they were considered legitimate during most of the monarchic period.

2 Kings 9 – 10, for example, narrates Jehu's *coup*, which, from the start, had a religious aim:

> Jehu expressly designated himself a 'zealot for Yahweh' (10:16, *qin'ātī l^{e}yhwh*), who wanted to put an end to the 'whoredom and magic art' of Jezebel (9:22), and thus completed his action with the destruction of the temple of Baal in Samaria and the murder of its priests and cultic followers (10:18 – 27).[72]

Many have noticed,[73] however, that there is no mention in the narrative of the אשרה that Ahab made in Samaria which is associated with the aforementioned temple of Baal in 1 Kings 16:32 – 33a:

70 See, e. g., Uehlinger, "Anthropomorphic," 97 – 155.

71 There is some debate as to whether the term in the biblical text refers merely to a cult object or to both a goddess and her image. Since the discovery of the Ras Shamra material, which definitively established the identity of the goddess Asherah, most scholars tend toward the latter view (see Hadley, *Cult*, 38 – 49). As noted already, it is quite normal in the ancient Near East for a divine image to be referred to by the name of the god/goddess that it was meant to represent. Nevertheless, most scholars recognize that certain passages refer explicitly to the goddess (e. g., Judg 3:7; 1 Kgs 15:13; 18:19; 2 Kgs 21:7; 23:4) while the vast majority probably refer to her cult representation, which was probably some sort of human-made, wooden, or "stylized" tree (see Hadley, *Cult*, 4 – 10, 54 – 77; Day, *Yahweh*, 52 – 59). On the possibility that the terminology may refer to "live trees," see also Larroca-Pitts, *"Of Wood,"* 171 – 85. On the proliferation of Iron Age tree cults, see O. Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 261; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 39 – 45.

72 Albertz, *History*, 155.

73 S. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh* (SBLMS 34; Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 6 – 7; cf. G. W. Ahlström, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion* (Lund: Gleerup, 1963), 50 – 53; R. Patai, "The Goddess Asherah," *JNES* 24 (1965), 46; S. Timm, *Die Dynastie Omri: Quellen und*

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ויקם מזבח לבעל בית הבעל אשר בנה בשמרון : ויעש אחאב את־האשרה

[Ahab] erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. And Ahab made an Asherah.

Further, that Ahab's אשרה still stood, long after the death of Jehu, is evident from 2 Kings 13:6:

אך לא־סרו מחטאות בית־ירבעם אשר־החטי את־ישראל בה הלך וגם האשרה עמדה בשמרון

Nevertheless, they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, by which he caused Israel to sin, but walked in them; and the Asherah also stood in Samaria.

The obvious conclusion is that Jehu and those backing him (i. e., Elijah, 9:1 – 13) did not consider Ahab's אשרה to be part of the Baal cult and, thus, did not see it as a proper target of reform. Olyan has pointed out that 1 Kings 16:32 – 33 does not contradict this conclusion: "…a careful reading of the Hebrew does not indicate association. There is no ambiguity in the syntax. A new sentence describes the אשרה. Ahab did not place it…in the temple of Baal."[74] Whether or not Jehu and his conservative supporters considered the אשרה a legitimate representation in the YHWH cult is not completely clear.[75] However, there must have been some reason for its survival, be it state or popular support; otherwise "it would have perished in Jehu's reform."[76] If nothing else, it certainly demonstrates the persistence of the אשרה in the ancient Israelite cult.

Looking at the evidence the other way around, the multiple mentions of אשרים as targets in the reforms of Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah also bear witness to the persistent use, if not previous legitimacy, of this representation in the Judean cult. Asa removed the queen mother for making an מפלצת לאשרה ("abominable image for Ashera"). He, then, cut it down and burned it (1Kgs 15:12 – 13). In 1 Kings 18:4, Hezekiah is likewise praised for cutting down the אשרה (along with נחש הנחשת, the "bronze serpent of Moses," both presumably in the Jerusalem temple). Soon after this, however, Manasseh remade the אשרה and set it up in the temple (2 Kgs 21:3, 7 [פסל האשרה]). Finally, Josiah destroyed it, along with those of the "high places" and the sanctuary at Bethel (2 Kgs 23:4, 6, 7, 14, 15). Thus, the אשרה functioned as an important and persistent cultic representation throughout

Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Israels im 9. Jahrhundert vor Christus (FRLANT 124; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 39 – 40, 297 – 300; Larocca-Pitts, *"Of Wood"*, 201; Sommer, *Bodies*, 46.

74 Olyan, *Asherah*, 6.

75 There are many scholars, however, who conclude from this that the אשרה must have been a cultic object sacred to YHWH. See, e. g., Sommer, *Bodies*, 46; H.W.F. Saggs, *Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* (London: Athlone, 1978), 23; Ahlström, *Aspects*, 51.

76 Olyan, *Asherah*, 7.

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the monarchical period. Only after the later reforms is it "officially" determined to exist outside the bounds of legitimacy. Yet, as demonstrated by Manasseh, there persisted "a struggle for royal support between proponents of the deuteronomistc ideology and those who defend traditional worship"[77] in Israel.

Other biblical texts may imply a positive evaluation of cultic trees/poles in early Israel. Thus, YHWH is given the epithet שׁכני סנה ("bush dweller," Deut 33:16; cf. Ex 3–4) and there are multiple texts that indicate the importance of trees in cultic contexts. Abraham moves from the Oak of Moreh (אלון מורה) near Shechem (Gen 12:6) to the Oaks of Mamre (אלני ממרא) near Hebron (Gen 13:18). There, he builds an altar to YHWH, who later appears to him and shares a meal (18:1). Likewise, the מלאך יהוה appears to Gideon under the oak (אלה) in Ophrah and shares a meal with him (Judg 6:11–24). In preparation for a move to Bethel to build an altar to YHWH, Jacob buries אלהי הנכר (the foreign gods) of his followers under the oak (אלה) in Shechem (Gen 35:4). Finally, and most significantly, Joshua sets up a stone (אבן) under the oak (אלה) in the sanctuary of YHWH (מקדשׁ יהוה, Josh 24:26).

The discovery of the Khirbet el-Qom and Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscriptions likewise bolster the former conclusion regarding the popularity/acceptability of אשׁרים in the Israelite cult.[78] The Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscriptions were found on fragments of two large pithoi, dating from the mid-ninth to the mid-eighth century BCE, and contain the expressions "YHWH of Samaria and his Asherah" (pithos A)[79] and "YHWH of Teman and his Asherah" (pithos B).[80] It is also generally agreed that YHWH's Asherah is mentioned on an inscription from Khirbet el-Qom, found in a burial cave dating to c. 750 or 700 BCE.[81] The primary

77 Olyan, *Asherah*, 9.

78 See also G. Gilmour's recent discussion of the IA II sherd found at the Ophel in Jerusalem, depicting two humanoid figures ("An Iron Age II Pictorial Inscription from Jerusalem Illustrating Yahweh and Asherah," *PEQ* 141:2 [2009], 87–103).

79 Note also the connection between אשׁרה and Samaria in 2 Kgs 13:6, האשׁרה עמדה בשׁמרון, above.

80 For transcription, translation, and discussion, see Hadley, *Cult*, 106–55.

81 Following J. Hadley's transcription and translation (*Cult*, 86), the relevant lines read:

1.	*'ryhw.hʿšr.ktbh*	1. Uriyahu the rich wrote it.
2.	*brk.'ryhw.lyhwh*	2. Blessed be Uriyahu by Yahweh
3.	*wmṣryh l'šrth hwš'lh*	3. for from his enemies by his (YHWH's) asherah he (YHWH) has saved him
4.	*l'nyhw*	4. by Oniyahu
5.	*l'šrth*	5. by his asherah
6.	*wl'??rth*	6. and by his a[she]rah

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debate surrounding these inscriptions centers on whether the expression "YHWH and his Asherah" refers to the goddess or her cultic representation. The early interpretation that the drawings pictured beneath the Kuntillet ʿAjrud pithos A inscription depicted the deities YHWH and Asherah is now widely rejected.[82] Nevertheless, many scholars remain convinced that the inscription, if not the drawings, refers to YHWH and the goddess.[83] As a number of scholars have demonstrated, however, "in ancient Hebrew idiom personal names do not take pronominal suffixes."[84] In other words, the term אשרתה cannot be translated "his Asherah," referring directly to the goddess herself.[85] It is thus likely that the Khirbet el-Qom and Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscriptions refer to a cultic representation.[86] As mentioned above, however, images of the goddess could be found in the Jerusalem temple (e.g., 1 Kgs 15:13; 2 Kgs 21:3, 7) and there are multiple references to the goddess herself in the biblical text,[87] so that the distinction may be somewhat semantic; the terminology reflects the presence of deity in the cult, whether by means of anthropomorphic statuary or stylized tree.[88]

82 See, e.g., Day, *Yahweh*, 50–51; P. Beck, "The Drawings from Horvat Teiman (Kuntillet ʿAjrud)," *Tel Aviv* 9 (1982), 27–31; Emerton, "New Light," 2–20; Hadley, *Cult*, 136–155. Most, however, accept that Asherah is depicted on Pithos A by her tree symbol.

83 See, e.g., W. Dever, "Asherah, Consort of YHWH? New Evidence from Kuntillet ʿAjrud," *BASOR* 255 (1984), 21–37; *idem*, "Recent Archaeological Confirmation of the Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel," *Hebrew Studies* 23 (1982), 37–43.

84 Day, *Yahweh*, 51; cf. Emerton, "New Light"; *idem*, "'Yahweh and his Asherah': The Goddess or Her Symbol?" *VT* 49 (1999), 315–317; J. H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions* (HSM 31; Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), 26–30; Olyan, *Asherah*, 25–34; Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 28–32; Z. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 403–4; Hadley, *Cult*, 104–105, 124–125.

85 Day has brought forth various analogies to suggest the feasibility of the view that a cult symbol (and not the goddess) is in view (*Yahweh*, 52).

86 A secondary question that has arisen is whether these cultic symbols were thought to represent the goddess Asherah or YHWH. Many have come to the conclusion that the אשרה mentioned on these inscriptions were considered as incarnations of YHWH. For example, K. McCarter argues that, "[i]n the cult of Yahweh's *ʾăšērâ*, his trace, sign, or effective presence, was marked with an upright wooden pole, called an asherah…YHWH's *ăšērâ* is not, however, the Canaanite Asherah. She is the Israelite Asherah, the personification of a hypostatic form of Yahweh" ("Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy: Biblical and Epigraphic Data," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* [eds. P. D. Miller, P. Hanson et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987], 149; cf. Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 228–36; M. S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* [New York: Harper & Row, 1990], 92–4; Sommer, *Bodies*, 47–8).

87 For discussion on the multitude of plaque and pendant images, as well as pillar figurines that have been found in Judah and that are also thought to represent the goddess, see Hadley, *Cult*, 161, 196–205.

88 M. Weinfeld notes that the "Asherah embodies the female element of the divinity, whether the term is taken as a reference to a goddess, or to a tree, or a wooden pole" ("Kuntillet ʿAjrud Inscriptions and Their Significance," *Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici* 1 [1984], 121–30).

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The persistence of the אשרה in the Israelite cult alongside the attestation of the relationship between YHWH and the goddess in the above inscriptions has led many to assume that Asherah must have functioned as YHWH's consort. That a "special relationship" did indeed exist between YHWH and the Asherah is supported both by the above inscriptions as well as by passages in the Hebrew Bible that point to the presence of אשרה in YHWHistic sanctuaries, such as in the Jerusalem temple or in proximity to YHWH's altar (Deut 16:21[89]). Such an assumption is a natural one since the goddess did function as El's consort at Ugarit.[90] When YHWH took the place of El for Israel, it is not far-fetched that he would also have taken El's wife.[91]

3.2.4 The Ark

The well-known complexities concerning the ark traditions make it difficult to arrive at any exact meaning for the ark (ארון).[92] In fact, the varied biblical interpretations of the ark can be seen when its different names are taken into consideration.[93] Thus, for example, the names ארון הברית ("ark of the covenant") and ארון העדת ("ark of the testimony"), found mainly in the book of Deuteronomy and the Priestly literature, respectively, emphasize the understanding that the ark functioned as a container for the tablets delivered to Moses on Sinai.[94] More

89 Day notes that Deut 16:21–22 condemns both the female (אשרה) and male (מצבה) representations of deity (*Yahweh*, 60):

לא־תטע לך אשרה כל־עץ אצל מזבח יהוה אלהיך אשר תעשה־לך : ולא־תקים לך מצבה אשר שנא יהוה אלהיך :

You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of YHWH your God, which you shall make, and you shall not set up a standing stone, which YHWH your God hates.

90 See, e.g., KTU 1.1–6 (The Baal Cycle) and KTU 1.14–16 (the Keret Epic). For a good discussion of these texts in relation to the function of Asherah (Athirat) at Ugarit, see Hadley, *Cult*, 38–43.

91 Cf. Albertz, *History*, 85; Day, *Yahweh*, 60; *idem*, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature," *JBL* 105 (1986), 393. That the biblical writers connect Asherah with Baal and not El or YHWH is likely due to the Deuteronomistic agenda to discredit Asherah by associating her with Baal. On this point, see, especially, Olyan, *Asherah*, 1–22.

92 For a brief summary including bibliography, see C. L. Seow, "Ark of the Covenant," *ABD* 1:386–393.

93 J. Maier, *Das israelitische Heiligtum* (Berlin, 1965), 82–83; Seow, "Ark," 1:386 f.; T. Cartledge, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 70. Of the 202 occurrences of the term, 195 refer to ancient Israel's cult object. Of those, only 53 refer to the ark without qualification.

94 Seow, "Ark," 1:387, 391 f; T. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (trans. F. H. Cryer. ConBOT 18. Lund: Gleerup, 1982), 51, 87. See, however, I. Wilson, "Merely a Container? The Ark in Deuteronomy," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel* (ed. J. Day; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 212–249. Wilson discusses Deut 10:8, which refers to YHWH setting apart the tribe of Levi "to carry the ark of the covenant of

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often, however, the ark is directly associated with a version of the divine name, e.g., ארון אלהים /יהוה ("ark of God/YHWH).[95] The majority of these occur in DtrH,[96] where the ark functions for Israel in ways comparable to the functions of divine images in other ancient Near Eastern cultures.[97] A number of recent studies have highlighted such a function for the ark in the so-called Ark Narrative of 1 Samuel.[98]

Aside from a few differences in detail, a consensus has grown on the identification of the Ark Narrative (1 Sam 2:12 – 17, 22 – 25; 4 – 6; 2 Sam 6) as being among the oldest independent sources incorporated into DtrH.[99] L. Rost was the first to isolate an independent narrative concerning the ark within Samuel in his 1926 monograph on historiographic traditions of the Israelite monarchy.[100] According to Rost, these passages (1 Sam 4 – 7:1 + 2 Sam 6) have a distinctive characteristic: in contrast to DtrH's usual focus on human figures (e.g., Samuel, Saul, David, etc.), the central figure in 1 Samuel 4 – 6 and 2 Samuel 6 is the ark of YHWH. Specifically, the narrative relates the capture of the ark by the Philistines (1 Sam 4:1b – 22), the power of the ark over the Philistines and their god and its subsequent return (1 Sam 5:1 – 7:1), and the journey of the ark into Jerusalem (2 Sam 6). For Rost, the narrative recounts an old Jerusalem cult legend regarding

the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister to him and to bless in his name" as a possible exception.

95 The expression and its variants occur 82 times in the Hebrew Bible.

96 The expression also occurs around 20 times in the Books of Chronicles.

97 Cf. B. A. Levine notes that "[r]eferring to the Ark in terms of its contents is characteristic of Deuteronomy (Deut 10:8; 31:9, 25 – 26). In presumably earlier sources, no such connection is expressed. It is likely that the Ark was originally conceived as a seat for the Deity or as an emblem of some sort"(*Numbers 1 – 20* [AB 4; New York: Doubleday, 1993], 316).

98 See, e.g., P. D. Miller and J. J. M. Roberts, *The Hand of the Lord: A Reassessment of the "Ark Narrative" of 1 Samuel* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1977); Lewis, "Syro-Palestinian," 93 – 97; Niehr, "Search," 81 – 2, 85 – 6; N. Levtow, *Images of Others* (BJS 11; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 132 – 43; Cf. F. M. Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1998), 91.

99 For reviews of the literary history, see P. K. McCarter, *1 Samuel* (AB 8; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 23ff; Miller and Roberts, *Hand*, 9 – 17; A. F. Campbell, *The Ark Narrative (1 Sam 4 – 6, 2 Sam 7): A Form-Critical and Traditio-Critical Study* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1975), 1 – 54; K. Smelik, "The Ark Narrative Reconsidered," in *New Avenues in the Study of Old Testament* (ed. A.S. van der Woude; *OtSt* 25; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 127 – 130. McCarter calls this hypothesis "among the most durable of modern scholarship" (*1 Samuel*, 23). For arguments for a later date, see Smelik, "Ark." Levtow reasonably acknowledges "the possibility that the earliest kernels of the tradition were composed during the united monarchy" but affirms with certainty "only that a later stage of the tradition was adapted into the Deuteronomic History in the late 7th and 6th centuries" (*Images*, 134 n.8).

100 L. Rost, *Die Überlieferung von der Thronnachfolge Davids* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1926). Eng. Tr.: *The Succession to the Throne of David* (trans. M. D. Rutter and D. M. Gunn; Sheffield: Almond, 1982).

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how the Shilonite cult symbol came to Jerusalem. Thus, the narrative served as a *hieros logos* for the sanctuary of the ark in Jerusalem.[101]

Certain trends can be observed since Rost's 1926 study. One of the most noteworthy is the comparison between the Ark Narrative and the broader ancient Near Eastern ritual traditions. Although not the first to bring to bear comparative material on the subject of the ark's capture and return,[102] Miller and Roberts' 1977 study takes seriously "the theological problem raised by the capture of one's gods" in an ancient Near Eastern context.[103] The practice of abducting a divine statue from a conquered city is amply attested in ancient Near Eastern cuneiform sources.[104] Such abductions were not merely political or economic, but psychological or, better, "theological."[105] In other words, "[t]he capture of the enemy's gods was seen, by the conquering power, as clear evidence for the superiority of the victor's gods."[106] The conquered people, however, often had a different interpretation of the event. For them, the defeat of the city/people did not demonstrate the weakness of their god(s): "[The vanquished] normally attributed their defeat to the anger of their own gods, not to the power of the enemy's gods."[107]

The similarity between these ancient Near Eastern literary traditions and the interpretation of the Israelite defeat at Ebenezer in 1 Samuel 4:1 – 2 is made clear in v. 3. Upon hearing of their defeat, the Israelite elders assign the defeat to the power of YHWH and not the Philistine army or their gods.[108] The elders suggest,

101 Rost, *Succession*, 34. As McCarter notes, dissent from Rost's hypothesis has largely been confined to his analysis of the narrator's purpose – "Cult legend seems too narrow a category for a composition that portrays the rejection of Shiloh and the house of Eli in favor of Jerusalem and its priesthood" (*1 Samuel*, 23 – 24) – and to his "definition of the pericope" (McCarter himself includes much of 1 Sam 2 in the narrative).

102 See, e. g., M. Delcor, "Jahweh et Dagon ou le Jahwisme face à la religion des Philistins, d'après 1 Sam. V," *VT* 14 (1964), 136 – 54, esp. 138; F. Schicklberger, *Die Ladeerzählungen des ersten Samuel-Buches: Eine literaturwissenschaftliche und theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung* (FB 7; Würzburg: Echter, 1973), 149, 181 – 86.

103 Miller and Roberts, *Hand*, 9 – 17.

104 On these texts, see Miller and Roberts, *Hand,* 9 – 17; Kutsko, *Between*, 103 – 23, 157 – 69; Bahrani, *Graven*, 149 – 84; *idem*, "Assault," 363 – 82; Cogan, *Imperialism*, 22 – 41, 119 – 21; Levtow, *Images*, 100 – 18. See also above, chap. 2.2.2.

105 Miller and Roberts, *Hand*, 10. On the psychological impact, see Bahrani, *Graven*, 174 – 82; Levtow, *Images*, 109 – 112; Freedberg, *Power*, 246 – 82, 378 – 428. See also above, pp. 34 f.

106 Miller and Roberts, *Hand*, 10.

107 Miller and Roberts, *Hand*, 10; cf. Levtow, *Images*, 112 – 118.

108 למה נגפנו יהוה היום לפני פלשתים ("Why did YHWH defeat us today before the Philistines?"). The inclusion of 1 Sam 2 into the Ark Narrative provides the answer for both this initial defeat as well as the eventual abduction of the ark: "[I]t was because of the cultic errors of the Shilonite priesthood. This rationale justifies the defeat of Israel at Ebenezer and, more importantly, it justifies the capture of the ark and the slaying of its custodians, the Elide priests" (Levtow, *Images*, 136; cf. McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 109; Miller and Roberts, *Hand*, 27 – 31).

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as a solution, to bring the ark from Shiloh "so that he may enter our midst and save us from the hand of our enemies," (ויבא בקרבנו וישענו מכף איבינו). The assumption of the elders here demonstrates the relationship between the ark and the presence and power of YHWH.[109] Further, according to the biblical text, the Israelite elders are not alone in understanding the ark in this way. In vv. 7 – 8a, the Philistines are presented as fearful due to the ark's entrance into the Israelite camp:

בא אלהים אל־המחנה ויאמרו...אוי לנו מי יצילנו מיד האלהים האדירים האלה
אלה הם האלהים המכים את־מצרים בכל־מכה במדבר

> God(s) have come into the camp and they said…woe to us! Who will rescue us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who struck Egypt with every sort of plague in the wilderness.[110]

Nevertheless, despite the presence of the ark in the camp of Israel, the Philistines are again victorious. This time, however, the ark is captured. The reaction to this catastrophe again confirms the image-like function of the ark in Israel. Upon learning of the ark's capture, Eli dies and his daughter-in-law gives birth to a son (4:21a – 22):

ותקרא לנער אי־כבוד...ותאמר גלה כבוד מישׂראל כי נלקח ארון האלהים

> She named the child Ichabod…She said, "The glory was exiled from Israel, for the ark of God was captured."

Thus the primary question of the rest of the narrative is whether the abduction and exile of the ark also signified the defeat of Yahweh at the hands of the Philistines and their deity. Levtow, following Miller and Roberts, observes that the issue at the center of the preceding and following events is the power or powerlessness of YHWH, represented literarily by YHWH's "hand" (יד):

The Israelite elders request the presence of the ark to save them from the "hand" of their enemies (1 Sam 4:3), the Philistines suffer when Yahweh's

109 Miller and Roberts, *Hand*, 33. Further, the various translations of the final clause in v 3 likewise point to the identification of the ark with YHWH. The implied subject of the verb ויבא is variously translated "so that he (YHWH) may enter our midst" (e.g., NRSV, McCarter) or "so that it (ark) may enter our midst" (e.g., ESV, Levtow). As Levtow notes, however, "[b]oth translations are viable because the ark is represented in the Ark Narrative as the iconic embodiment of Yahweh's power" (*Images*, 136).

110 The final phrase should more likely be read *ûbĕmō-deber* "and with pestilence." The MT reading is contrary to biblical tradition. Although the LXX closely follows the MT, it includes the conjunctive *waw* (καὶ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ). The long form of the preposition (במו) is rare (archaic and poetic). See, Miller and Roberts, *Hand*, 35, 99; McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 104; M. Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography II," *Biblica* 45 (1964), 401 – 2.

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"hand" is "heavy upon them" (1 Sam 5:6 – 11), and Yahweh's power over Dagon is represented through the removal of Dagon's hands.[111]

Yet, although the power of YHWH vis-à-vis the Philistines and their deity is at the heart of the narrative, YHWH's power is, here, conceived as a localized one and is "embodied iconographically by the ark."[112] In other words, where the ark is, there also is the power and presence of YHWH.

The Philistines also treat the captured ark in a fashion consistent with the ancient Near Eastern context. The act of placing the ark alongside (אצל) the image of Dagon (5:2) is comparable to the Assyrian practice of presenting a defeated god (by which is meant the statue of that god) to their gods in order to demonstrate the superiority of the latter.[113] Or, as Cogan suggests, the presentation could be meant as an act of honor since the defeated god had abandoned his/her own people, recognizing the power and might of the conquering deity.[114] That the ark is "set up alongside Dagon" (ויציבו אתו אצל דגון) certainly suggests that the ark functions in the temple of Dagon as a divine image and an object of worship.[115] As far as the Philistines are concerned, the ark stands in parallel with the anthropomorphic statue of Dagon. Just as his statue in the temple represents the power and presence of Dagon, so also is the ark the locus of the presence of YHWH. Nevertheless, YHWH will not be subjugated to a lesser role and, for the next two mornings, the Philistines find Dagon lying prostrate *before* the ark (והנה דגון נפל לפניו ארצה לפני ארון יהוה, vv. 3, 4) not, significantly, beside him. On the second occasion, however, there is a modification: the Philistines find the image of their god decapitated and without hands (v. 4). In effect, YHWH turns the table on the Philistines and their god. Although the ark is captured, it is the image of Dagon that ultimately pays homage and is mutilated. Dagon is thus rendered powerless. Levtow compares this act not only to the multiple examples of cult image abduction and mutilation,[116] which seems clear enough, but also to Israelite cult image parodies: "Deprived of all sensory organs…the cult image of Dagon becomes what the icon parodies claim Babylonian cult images are: dead and powerless."[117]

The subsequent return of the ark from the land of the Philistines to, ultimately, Jerusalem also finds parallels in Near Eastern literature concerning di-

111 Levtow, *Images*, 140.
112 Levtow, *Images*, 140.
113 Miller and Roberts, *Hand*, 43, 67; cf. Cogan, *Imperialism*, 27.
114 Cogan, *Imperialism*, 20.
115 Miller and Roberts, *Hand*, 43. Cogan suggests that Amaziah's setting up Edomite gods and worshipping them, in 2 Chr 25:14, may also reflect this practice (*Imperialism*, 116 – 17). Such an act is consistent with the Philistines' declaration in 1 Sam 4:7 – 8.
116 Levtow, *Images*, 138.
117 Levtow, *Images*, 140.

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vine images. The entrance of the ark into Jerusalem is comparable to Marduk's rise to kingship over the other gods and his reorganization of the cosmos with Babylon at its center as recounted in *Enūma Eliš*, which may have as its immediate background the return of Marduk's statue from captivity in Elam.[118] Elsewhere, the return of Marduk's statue from Elam is described as originating from the deity's own volition, as a response to the (new) king, and accompanied by celebration:

> [On account of] my distressing lamentations, my ardent prayers, my entreaties, and the prostration that I performed in lamentation before him daily, his profound(?) heart(?) took pity, and he relented to the holy city. He made his decision and set forth from the evils of Elam, he took the road of jubilation, the path of gladness, and the way to Babylon (that signified his) hearing and acceptance of my prayers. The people of the land looked upon his lofty, suitable, noble form, as they acclaimed his brilliance, all of them paying heed to him. The Lord entered and took up his comfortable abode…Many sheep were slaughtered, prime bulls were provided in abundance, food offerings were magnificent, incense was heaped up…[119]

The entrance of the ark into Jerusalem (2 Sam 6) is very much comparable. It is also seen as originating from the volition of YHWH, accompanied by celebration, and is likewise found in the context of the rise of a political empire. The entrance of the ark into Jerusalem thus functions as a legitimizing sign of the new reign of David. Indeed, it is certainly plausible that many of the YHWH traditions, including the eternal choice of both David and Zion, may have grown up from the account of this procession.[120]

If nothing else, the Ark Narrative demonstrates Israel's willing participation in the rhetoric of divine image motifs found elsewhere in the ancient Near East. The ark is seen to function exactly as any anthropomorphic divine image. Its presence means that the presence of the deity is immanent.[121] It is targeted and sought out for capture in order to demonstrate the superiority of the victorious deity, in this case Dagon. Similarly, its capture symbolizes the subjugation of

118 W. G. Lambert, "The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I: A Turning point in the History of Ancient Mesopotamian Religion," in *The Seed of Wisdom: Essays in Honour of T. J. Meek* (ed. W. S. McCullough; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1964), 3 – 13; T. W. Mann, *Divine Presence and Guidance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1977), 217; cf. J. J. M. Roberts, "The Davidic Origin of the Zion Tradition," *JBL* 92 (1973), 341 n.76; G. Ahlström, "The Travels of the Ark: A Religio-Political Composition," *JNES* 43 (1984), 141 – 149. J. van Dijk suggests a composition date in the late Old Babylonian period ("L'hymne a Marduk avec intercession pour le roi Abī'ešuh," *MIOF* 12 [1966], 57 – 74).

119 Translation in Foster, *Muse*, 379 – 80.

120 Seow, "Ark," 1:391.

121 The objection that YHWH and the ark are not coterminous (1 Sam 3:2 – 18; 4:5 – 11) is not at all relevant to the discussion as this is also precisely the case in cults centered on anthropomorphic statues. See above, pp. 30 f.

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YHWH to Dagon, "the iconic manifestation of a political defeat."[122] The superiority of YHWH, however, is reaffirmed by the mutilation of Dagon's statue and, ultimately, the ark's procession into Jerusalem, which recalls the triumphal cult image enthronement processions that served to legitimate a political power and its leader.[123]

The parallels between the Israelite depiction of the ark and divine images elsewhere are, at times, so close that some scholars believe the tradition conceals an original divine image of YHWH. Thus, taking into account the varied biblical characterizations of the ark, van der Toorn suggests that "[t]he most plausible explanation for this phenomenon…is that the ark contained an image or a material symbol of Yahweh."[124] Niehr likewise suggests that the processional hymns, found in the Hebrew Bible, refer to a divine image of YHWH and not, as traditionally thought, the ark. Thus, for example, he notes that the use of the verb בוא ("to come/enter") in Psalm 24 most probably refers to the movement of a YHWH statue: שׂאו שׁערים ראשׁיכם והנשׂאו פתחי עולם ויבוא מלך הכבוד ("Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may enter," vv. 7, 9). Many see in this text a reference to the ark entering the temple, but as Niehr and others have noted, "the ark is not mentioned at all; nor does the ark have sufficient theological significance to do duty as the representation of YHWH."[125] While many of the ark traditions may not "have sufficient theological significance" to carry such an interpretation, some traditions surrounding the ark do appear to assign the function of YHWH's substitute to it (cf. Num 10:35–36; Ps 132:8).

122 Levtow, *Images*, 138.

123 Significantly, as Levtow notes, such processionals often concluded "Mesopotamian iconic practices including the *mīs pî* ritual, the *akītu* festival, and the return of images captured in warfare" (*Images*, 139).

124 "The Iconic Book Analogies between the Babylonian Cult of Images and the Veneration of the Torah," in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. K. van der Toorn; CBET 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 241–242. According to van der Toorn, the recasting of the ark mirrors the growing veneration of the written word: "When it became a shrine for the revealed Word of God, its new function did not diminish its holiness; the written law had, in effect, taken the place of the image." Niehr expresses a similar thought regarding the later "coalition" of "the cherubim throne, the Deuteronomistic shem-theology and the ark" in texts like 1 Kgs 6:1–38, which function to "conceal the historical presence of YHWH's cult statue – something no longer tolerated in certain circles after 586 BCE" ("Search," 81–82). On 1 Kgs 6, see also G. W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 553 and n.4; J. van Seters, "Solomon's Temple: Fact and Ideology in Biblical and Near Eastern Historiography," *CBQ* 59 (1997), 45–57.

125 Niehr, "Search," 86.

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3.3 Iconoclasm

Ironically, ancient Israel's intimate familiarity with the notion of deity made manifest by a material object is most evident in their explicit denials of such a possibility. These denials take many forms (prohibition, condemnation, parody, etc.) and challenge the belief that raw, profane, and, above all, lifeless material could ever become a divine being. Further, these denials show a level of knowledge of, if not participation in, the broader rhetoric and ritual of cults centered on divine images.

3.3.1 Hosea and the Deuteronomistic Reform Movement

As previously mentioned, there is a growing consensus on the relatively late date of the so-called *Bilderverbot* texts in the Hebrew Bible (e. g., Ex 20:4 – 6; Deut 5:8 – 10; Ex 20:23; 34:17; Lev 19:4; 26:1; cf. Deut 27:15). In his in-depth study of these texts, Dohmen demonstrates that all of these texts exhibit evidence of exilic redaction, most of which is Deuteronomistic.[126] According to Dohmen, these texts originally developed from a concern, not against cultic images as such, but against the worship of foreign gods and a type of worship considered alien to a semi-nomadic way of life. Thus, it may be that in the early, pre-exilic cult YHWH did not have an anthropomorphic statue, but was represented by other means, e. g., standing stones, ark, asherah, etc. Indeed, as demonstrated already, standing stones had a central role in Iron Age Israel and the ark is recorded as functioning, even in DtrH, in ways little different from anthropomorphic images elsewhere. Nevertheless, there were anthropomorphic and theriomorphic images in the pre-exilic Israelite cult, known from both biblical and extra-biblical material, and the presence of bull images in Dan and Bethel, Nehushtan in Jerusalem, and the persistence of the asherah, even in the face of Jehu's cultic reform demonstrate that representations could function legitimately in the Israelite cult. It is only with Hosea and, later, the Deuteronomistic reform movement that these heretofore legitimate Israelite cult practices began to lose their "religious legitimation." Interestingly, however, it is in just these polemical attempts that the biblical authors betray their familiarity with conceptualizations common to ancient Near Eastern cults centered on divine images.

We have already seen how the Deuteronomistic polemic against cultic images can engage in rhetoric similar to the numerous examples of cultic image "warfare." Thus, the mutilation of Dagon's image reverses the perception that the capture of the ark portrayed: YHWH had not been defeated but had, instead,

126 Dohmen, *Bilderverbot*, 154 – 62, 210 – 15, 180 – 94.

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dictated his people's defeat. Of course, the capture and mutilation of cultic images is quite common in the biblical iconoclastic tradition. The propagandistic penchant to portray illegitimate cultic practices as "Canaanite" and "Baalistic" further confirms the likelihood that the destruction of cultic images should also be seen in this light. Indeed, the central role of this type of rhetoric is highlighted by its inclusion at the very beginning of the Deuteronomic legal code (Deut 12:2 – 3):

אבד תאבדון את־כל־המקמות אשר עבדו־שם הגוים אשר אתם ירשים אתם
את־אלהיהם ... ונתצתם את־מזבחתם ושברתם את־מצבתם ואשריהם תשרפון
באש ופסילי אלהיהם תגדעון ואבדתם את־שמם מן־המקום ההוא

> You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations, whom you shall dispossess, served their gods… You shall tear down their altars and smash their standing stones and burn their asherim with fire. You shall cut down the images of their gods and destroy their name from that place.

Levtow, commenting on this verse, makes the poignant observation that the retrojection of the Deuteronomists' ideals on the traditions of the conquest of Canaan includes not only the "destruction (indeed, the 'killing') of all iconic foci of ritual power that stand…in opposition to the Deuteronomistic regime"[127] but acts that are "reminiscent of the erasure and reinscription of divine and royal names on ancient West Asian divine and royal statuary."[128] What Levtow has in mind here is the dual instructions to, on the one hand, "destroy their name from that place" and, on the other, to "seek the place which YHWH your God will choose…for his habitation to place his name there" (Deut 12:5). In this way, even the so-called *shem*-theology, which many believe to represent the Deuteronomistic rejection of these very conceptions,[129] indicates a willing participation in the rhetoric of ancient Near Eastern cults.

Further, as M. Dick points out, some of the characteristics found in later prophetic parodies against cult images are seen, in nascent form, in Hosea and Deuteronomistic texts.[130] According to Dick, the principal arguments of the Israelite prophets against the fashioning and worship of cultic images are centered "on three distinct but closely related points": 1) identifying the cult image with the deity him- or herself; 2) parodying the raw materials out of which the divine image is made; 3) challenging how a product of human hands can be considered divine.[131] The use of the verb עשה ("to make") in many Deuterono-

127 Levtow, *Images*, 148.
128 Levtow, *Images*, 148.
129 See, most recently, Sommer, *Bodies*, 62 – 8.
130 Dick, "Prophetic," 1 – 54.
131 Dick, "Prophetic," 30.

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mistic texts suggests a similar agenda.[132] If Dohmen is correct, however, the prohibition against "making" a divine image can be found in the earliest form of the *Bilderverbot* and likely indicates only a conservative reaction against a different type of representation (i. e. those made of silver and gold). In this way, many of the legal texts (both early and late) specifically prohibit the "making" of an image, possibly without conscious irony (e. g., Ex 20:3; 34:17; Lev 19:4; 26:1; Deut 4:16).[133]

Other Deuteronomistic texts do not, however, appear to be ignorant of the irony. Thus, for example, Judges 17 – 18 relates the story of Micah, his household shrine, and the making of a cultic image: ותקח אמו מאתים כסף ותתנהו לצורף ויעשׂהו פסל ומסכה ("[Micah's] mother took 200 pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith and he made it into a metal covered image,"17:4; cf. 18:24, 27). On this passage, H. D. Preuss argues that the attestation of the Deuteronomistic cliché, especially combined with the reference to the craftsman (צורף, "smith"), likely represents an early attempt to mock the cultic statue by calling attention its human origin.[134] This conclusion is further supported by the mocking portrayal of Micah, who confesses to the human origin of the statue while at the same time maintaining its divinity. The narrative describes the abduction of Micah's cultic images by the people of Dan (Judg 18:17 f.). Upon the discovery of the theft, Micah gathers his household and confronts the Danites with the words: את־אלהי אשׁר־עשׂיתי לקחתם ("You have taken my gods, which I have made!" v. 24; cf. vv. 27, 31).

Levtow draws attention to similar conceptions in 2 Kings 19:15 – 19, where Hezekiah stands "before YHWH" and prays:

> יהוה אלהי ישׂראל ישׁב הכרבים אתה־הוא האלהים לבדך לכל ממלכות
> הארץ אתה עשׂית את־השּׁמים ואת־הארץ : הטה יהוה אזנך ושׁמע פקח יהוה
> עיניך וראה ושׁמע את דברי סנחריב אשׁר שׁלחו לחרף אלהים חי : אמנם יהוה
> החריבו מלכי אשׁור את־הגוים ואת־ארצם : ונתנו את־אלהיהם באשׁ כי לא
> אלהים המה כי אם־מעשׂה ידי־אדם עץ ואבן ויאבדום : ועתה יהוה אלהינו
> הושׁיענו נא מידו וידעו כל־ממלכות הארץ כי אתה יהוה אלהים לבדך :

> O YHWH, God of Israel, who is enthroned upon the cherubim, you are God, you alone, for all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. Stretch out your ear, O YHWH, and hear; open your eyes, O YHWH, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. Truly, O YHWH, the kings of Assyria have laid to waste the nations and their lands and have given their gods over to

132 M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 324, notes that variations of the "Deuteronomistic cliché"(עץ ואבן / חרשׁ / ידי אדם (אלהים) מעשׂה ידים) may be found in Deut. 4:28; 27:15; cf. 28:64; 31:29; 1 Kgs 16:7; 2 Kgs 19:18 (= Isa 37:19); 22:17; Jer 1:16; 25:6 f.; 32:30; 44:8; cf. Isa 2:8; Hos 14:4; Mic 5:12.

133 Cf. Dick, "Prophetic," 34 – 35.

134 H. D. Preuss, *Verspottung fremder Religionen im Alten Testament* (BWANT 5; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971), 65; cf. Dick, "Prophetic," 35.

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> the fire, for they were not gods, but the work of human hands, wood and stone. Therefore, they were destroyed. So now, O YHWH our God, save us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O YHWH, are alone God.

Of primary importance here is the comparison made between YHWH and the gods of the nations: YHWH is the "living God" with the ability to both hear and see, while the gods of the nations are "not gods, but the work of human hands, wood and stone." These details then justify the powerlessness of the nations before the might of Assyria and, likewise, Israel's trust in YHWH to defeat Sennacherib. Significantly, the Deuteronomists describe the cultic images of Assyria as powerless, even before their destruction.[135]

Although these thoughts likely reflect later exilic or post-exilic editing,[136] one may find the origin of this type of polemic in the late pre-exilic prophets. According to Hosea, for example, cultic images are the work of human hands (14:4), made by craftsmen (8:4–6; 13:2), which can be "smashed to pieces" (8:6). Perhaps most important for the later development of the prophetic parody is Hosea's explicit link between the worthless cult image and the deity him/herself: ולא־נאמר עוד אלהינו למעשׂה ידינו ("We will say no more, 'Our God,' to the work of our hands," 14:4).[137]

Although not as expansive and detailed as the later prophetic parodies, the attacks on divine images by Hosea and his successors clearly demonstrate a willing participation in the rhetoric associated with cults centered on divine images. In order to demonstrate the power of YHWH, the people are to capture and destroy the "foreign" cult images. Moreover, these images can never be truly alive and powerful since they are made by human hands and "[h]ow can a product of human craft represent the divine?"[138]

3.3.2 Prophetic Parodies

The Deuteronomistic denial that a human-crafted statue can become a living god is also found in a more developed and sustained form in the so-called prophetic

135 Levtow, *Images*, 146. This attempt to link the human origin to the divine image is found in multiple Deuteronomistic texts (see above, n.313).

136 For a "post-deuteronomistic" dating of Judg 17–18, see M. Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 15; Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1981), 121 n.29; A.G. Auld, "Review of Boling, *Judges:* The Framework of Judges and the Deuteronomist," *JSOT* 1 (1976), 41–6; T. Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 138. On the exilic, or possibly post-exilic, nature of 2 Kgs 19:15–19, see Römer, *So-Called*, 154–5.

137 Some scholars, however, believe that these verses in Hosea are in fact secondary, e.g., see Nissinen, *Prophetie*, 159, 161–163, 165–166, 317–318.

138 Dick, "Prophetic," 35.

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parodies of Jeremiah (10:1 – 16) and Deutero-Isaiah (40:18 – 20; 41:67; 44:9 – 20).[139] The literary-critical classification of the idol parody passages is a matter of some dispute. The parodies appear in a wide variety of corpora and share common structures, themes, and terminology. W. M. W. Rolf aptly reflects the traditional skepticism regarding the integrity of most idol parody passages by treating the passages as independent units, constituting a separate literary genre.[140] Others, however, emphasize the rhetorical and literary connections between these passages and the wider literary context. For those scholars, the idol parodies constitute a literary motif.[141] While it is probable that these idol parodies circulated independently before being inserted into their present prophetic contexts,[142] most of the passages now play an essential rhetorical role in their immediate contexts so that their function is integrally related to the surrounding material. Further, it is precisely in the pairing of these idol parodies with alternating material that one glimpses the purpose of these integrated texts: to produce "a series of binary oppositions between Israelite and Babylonian deities specifically and Israelite and Babylonian ritual and social systems generally."[143] This type of integration is seen especially in those texts wherein the cultic image and craftsman are explicitly contrasted with YHWH, such as in Jeremiah 10:1 – 16 and Isaiah 44:9 – 20.[144] Both texts detail the various craftsmen, tools, and material that contributed to the making of the cultic image and, as Levtow notes, both texts are "embedded within a larger framework that alternates between icon parody and Yahwistic hymn."[145]

The "embedded" nature of the parody is much easier to see in Isaiah 44, where

139 Note also the less sustained arguments in Hab 2:18 – 19, Ps 115:3 – 9; 135:15 – 18, and, as noted above, Hosea. Other than the obvious similarities, the prophetic parodies, however, do not specifically cite any of the *Bilderverbot* texts, so that dependence is difficult to maintain. Dick, however, suggests that, "the focus on the 'making' (עשה) of the cult image" and the combination of idol parody with השתחוה ("bow down"), "might reveal an indebtedness to late versions of the *Bilderverbot*" (Dick, "Prophetic," 16 n.39).

140 "For Life, He Appeals to Death (Wis 13:18): A Study of Old Testament Idol Parodies," *CBQ* 37 (1975), 21 – 47.

141 See, e. g., Preuss, *Verspottung*; R. J. Clifford, "The Function of Idol Passages in Second Isaiah," *CBQ* 42 (1980), 450 – 464.

142 Dick, "Prophetic," 1 n.1 and 17. This is particularly true of Isa 40:18 – 20 and 41:6 – 7. A. Fitzgerald aptly demonstrates the likelihood that these two passages originally circulated as a unit and were consequently split, inserted, and thoroughly integrated into two different contexts ("The Technology of Isaiah 40:19 – 20 + 41:6 – 7," *CBQ* 51 (1989), 426 – 446). According to Dick, the later insertion of the parody "may also help explain the apparent lack of precision in the parodies in their present context," for example, "the frequent change between singular and plural" ("Prophetic," 17). Cf. W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 322.

143 Levtow, *Images*, 40.

144 Cf. Hab 2:18 – 19, Ps 115:3 – 9; 135:15 – 18.

145 Levtow, *Images*, 62.

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material extolling YHWH in vv. 1 – 8 and vv. 21 – 28 surrounds the idol parody of vv. 9 – 20.[146] In contrast, the hymns to YHWH are interwoven into the parodies of Jeremiah 10.[147] Nevertheless, the effects are the same: The god of Israel is shown to be infinitely more powerful than the idols and idol-makers of Mesopotamia. This is done by means of terminological and thematic contrast. For example, in Jeremiah 10:1 – 16, the idols are insubstantial (הבל), a "work of mockery" (מעשׂה תעתעים, v. 15), both "stupid and foolish" (יבערו ויכסלו, v. 8) with no "breath" (רוח) in them (v. 14). They are dead: they cannot speak nor can they walk; they must be carried (v. 5). They are powerless to do anything, whether good or evil, so that they are not to be feared (אל־תיראו מהם, v. 5). In contrast, YHWH is "true" (אמת) and is, indeed, alive (חיים, v. 10; note also עולם, "everlasting"). He is powerful, shaking the earth (v. 10). His voice is heard: it brings forth the storm and the flood (v. 13); it even controls the "wind" (רוח, v. 13). Thus, he is to be feared (מי לא יראך, v. 7). Likewise, just as the craftsman are "skilled" (חכמים, v. 9), YHWH "established the world by his wisdom" (מכין תבל בחכמתו, v. 12) and just as the craftsman makes (עשׂה) lifeless, powerless statues (e. g., v. 9), so YHWH makes/forms (יצר/ עשׂה) heaven, earth, and all things (e. g., vv. 12, 16).

Significantly, YHWH is compared with the makers of cultic images in terms of their own function and character. The chief point of comparison concerns YHWH's power over creation (whether the heavens and earth, or Israel), which is juxtaposed with the images made by humans that, therefore, remain bound to their weak earthly nature.[148] According to Levtow, the emphasis on "Yahwistic

146 See J. D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34 – 66* (WBC 25; Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 686 – 87; C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40 – 66* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; OTL; London: SCM, 1969), 138 – 144; Dick, "Prophetic," 24; Levtow, *Images*, 62.

147 The MT and LXX versions of Jer 10:1 – 16 differ significantly from one another. The LXX omits the MT's vv. 6 – 8 and 10, while the MT's v. 9 appears in the LXX between vv. 4 and 5. Further the Jeremiah manuscripts found at Qumran offer little help as they appear to attest to both traditions: 4QJer[a] agrees with the MT (at least in terms of the sequence of vv. 9 – 10), while 4QJer[b] appears to bear witness to a Hebrew Vorlage that underlies the shorter LXX version (see E. Tov, "4 QJer[b]," in *Qumran Cave 4.X: The Prophets* [eds. E. Ulrich, F. M. Cross et al.; DJD 15; Oxford: Oxford University, 1997], 171 – 76). It is difficult to arrive at the "original" form of the text, as it appears that the book of Jeremiah circulated in different versions (a shorter version represented by LXX and 4QJer[b] and a longer version represented by MT and 4QJer[a,c]) until quite late. On this issue, see, e. g., E. Tov, "The Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Its Textual History," in *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (ed. J. Tigay; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1985), 211 – 37. It is thus impossible to date with any certainty the present form of the passage; it could be either late pre-exilic, exilic, or post-exilic. On the weaving together of icon parody (vv. 3 – 5, 8 – 9, 14 – 15) and hymns to YHWH (vv. 6 – 7, 10, 12 – 13, 16), see, most recently, Levtow, *Images*, 50 – 55; cf. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 336.

148 Many have made this observation, but the wording here is dependent on insights of T. Overholt, "The Falsehood of Idolatry: An Interpretation of Jer. X. 1 – 16," *JTS* 16:1 (1965), 12.

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creation ideology implicitly attacks the power of Babylonian deities championed in Mesopotamian cosmogonic myth, such as *Enūma Eliš*…"[149] Thus, the parody "challenges the power of Mesopotamian gods" by setting YHWH up as the one who creates and controls the forces of his creation.[150] Such depictions attack the foreign gods where they were thought to flourish: YHWH is supreme over the cosmos, not the foreign deities as manifested by their images. Rather than being powerful over nature, they are instead directly linked to it and are, therefore, subservient to YHWH.

This rhetorical strategy is present in Isaiah 44:1 – 28. Smith lists the contrasts as follows:[151]

> 1. "To make" (עשׂה): idols in verses 13, 15, 17, 19 versus Yahweh the creator in verses 2 and 24.
> 2. "To craft" (יצר): "idol crafters" in verse 9 versus Yahweh as one "who crafts you from the womb" in verses 2 and 24.
> 3. "To fear" (פחד): idol-makers are afraid in verse 11 versus Israel told in verse 8 "do not fear."
> 4. "Witness" (עד): Israel is Yahweh's witness (verse 8), which contrasts with the witness of the idols in verse 9.
> 5. "To know" (ידע): Israel knows who the only God is (verse 8), whereas image-makers do not (verses 18, 19).
> 6. "To be glorified/beauty" (פאר): Yahweh is "glorified" through Israel (verse 23), whereas images are made according to the "beauty" (תפארת) of humans (verse 13).
> 7. "Wood" (עץ) + "forest" (יער): wood is cut down in order to serve both as wood for the statue and fuel for burning (verse 14; see also עץ in verse 19), whereas all the trees of the forest praise Yahweh (verse 23).
> 8. Recognition formulary: the craftsman declares concerning the image: "You are my god" (אלי אתה, verse 17), whereas Yahweh declares to Jacob/Israel: "You are my servant" (עבדי־אתה)// "You are my servant" (עבד־לי אתה, verse 21).
> 9. The statue is expected to be able to save (נצל, verse 17), but Yahweh is the redeemer (גאל) of Jacob/Israel (verses 22, 23).

The courtroom setting of Isaiah 44 especially highlights the contrast between YHWH and the deities of Mesopotamia. As Westermann notes, the trial speech of

149 Levtow, *Images*, 54 – 55; cf. R. Carroll, *Jeremiah* (OTL; London: SCM, 1986), 257.

150 Levtow, *Images*, 54 – 55. This is seen, for example, in YHWH's depiction as storm god in Jer 10:13: לקול תתו המון מים בשמים ויעלה נשׂאים מקצה ארץ ברקים למטר עשׂה ויוצא רוח מאצרתיו ("When he utters his voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens and he makes the mists rise from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses").

151 *Origins*, 189; cf. Levtow also notes the contrast between YHWH who "stretches out (נטה) the heavens" (v. 24) and the woodsmith who "stretches out (נטה) a measuring line" (v. 13) (*Images*, 63 – 64).

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YHWH surrounds the idol parody in this chapter (vv. 6 – 8, 21 – 22),[152] presenting YHWH's credentials, calling witnesses, recalling past acts of redemption and creation, and reminding Israel of her obligations.[153] The parody (vv. 9 – 20), then, functions as the opportunity for the foreign gods to make their case.[154] The question which begins the trial, ומי־כמוני ("Who is like me?" v. 7), puts the issue to the defendants and makes necessary the judgment of the audience.[155] The trial is, however, already "fixed"; the evidence presented is selective, biased, and methodologically flawed: the Israelite authors "placed a phenomenological description of Mesopotamian religion alongside a theological description of Yahwism."[156] Yet, in doing so, these authors reveal an intimate knowledge of the necessary materials, the manufacturing process, and the conceptualization of cultic images. Above all, this is evident in Jeremiah 10:1 – 16, Isaiah 40:18 – 20, 41:6 – 7, and 44:9 – 20, where many have noted the abundance of rare and technical terminology for the different craftsmen,[157] tools,[158] and materials.[159]

152 Westermann, *Isaiah 40 – 66*, 138 – 144; cf. Dick, "Prophetic," 24 – 25; Levtow, *Images*, 62 n.55.

153 Cf. Isa 41:21 – 29.

154 Cf. Levtow, *Images*, 62 – 63 n.55.

155 Note also the rhetorical question in Jeremiah 10:7: מי לא יראך מלך הגוים ("Who would not fear you, O King of the nations?").

156 Saggs, *Encounter*, 15. Saggs continues: "The Babylonian might have pointed out that for several centuries YHWH…had lived inside…a decorated chest made of acacia wood. He was of rather uncertain temper, but in the main could be kept good-humoured by regular offerings of the smoke of burnt beef fat, of which he was inordinately fond."

157 E.g., חרש עצים ("woodsmith," Isa 44:13; cf. Jer 10:3; Isa 40:20); צורף ("goldsmith," Jer 10:9, 14; Isa 40:19); חרש ברזל ("ironsmith," Isa 44:12). See, esp., Dick, "Prophetic," 1 – 53; Levtow, *Images*, 40 – 86; Fitzgerald, "Technology," 426 – 446; Schroer, *Bilder*, 197 – 221.

158 E.g., מעצד ("chisel"/ "adz," Jer 10:3; Isa 44:12); מסמרים/מסמרות ("nails"/ "pegs" Jer 10:4; Isa 41:7); מקבת ("hammer," Jer 10:4; Isa 44:12; see, however, Fitzgerald, who understands this term to mean "mortise," as in the act of joining the image to its base by means of pegs ["Technology," 445]); פטיש ("blacksmith's hammer," Isa 41:7); שרד ("stylus"), מקצעות ("plane"), and מחוגה ("compass," Isa 40:13). Again, see, esp., Dick, "Prophetic," 1 – 53; Levtow, *Images*, 40 – 86; Fitzgerald, "Technology," 426 – 446; Schroer, *Bilder*, 197 – 221.

159 Among the listed materials is, of course, the requisite mention of precious metals, such as silver and gold, but more important by far is the listing of rare terms for the types of wood. Note, e. g., Isa 44:14 ארן // Akk. *erēnu* "cedar," which H. R. Cohen points out was used for both figurines and for burning in the cult (*Biblical Hapax Legomena in the Light of Akkadian and Ugaritic* [Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1978], 44 – 45). Dick, likewise, notes its presence in such rituals as the *mīs pî* ("Prophetic," 29). Perhaps more significant is the oft-misunderstood clause in Isa 40:20, המסכן תרומה עץ לא־ירקב יבחר, which Hurowitz translates, "the *mskn* tree is (his) selection, a tree that will not rot he chooses" ("What Goes in Is What Comes Out," in *Text, Artifact, and Image* [eds. G. M. Beckman and T. J. Lewis; BJS 346; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006], 17 – 18). This is comparable to the description of the Akk. *musukannu* wood as *iṣṣi dārûti* "a wood that is everlasting," which was used in the making of cultic images in Mesopotamia. On this phrase, see *CAD* D §118; Cohen, *Biblical*, 133 n. 67; I. Ephal, "Isa 40:19 – 20: On the Linguistic and Cultural Background of Deutero-Isaiah," *Shnaton* 10 (1986 – 89), 31 – 35; Dick, "Prophetic," 23; T. Ornan, *The Triumph of the*

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These polemics, with their focus on the origin of the statue, are regarded by some as evidence of Israel's ignorance of the cults surrounding them. Thus, Y. Kaufmann argues that the complete absence of "mythological material" and the focus on "fetishism" underscores "the gulf that separates biblical religion from paganism."[160] Kaufman recognizes that the target of these polemics is, in fact, the ritual in which a "block of wood" becomes a god.[161] For Kaufmann the true source of "authentic paganism," however, is found in the mythologies:

> Over and over again the prophet ridicules the belief that inanimate objects are gods…yet he has not a word about the gods or their myths. It never occurred to him to contrast the sublime God of Israel with the contentious, lustful deities of the pagans and to argue from this contrast that the gods are vanity. If our author had but dipped into the treasury of Babylonian myths, what a mine of material he would have found for his satires: gods who are born and die, who procreate, who eat, drink, and sleep, who make war on their mother, and crowd like flies around the sacrifice. Here was an arsenal which might have armed him to strike at the very heart of paganism…[162]

In this Kaufmann is both right and wrong. It is certainly the case that the parodies focus almost completely on the cultic rituals. Yet, as pointed out by Levtow, Kaufmann errs by applying "an understanding of ritual and religion rooted in dualism and in early twentieth century theories of ritual fetishism," which privilege "belief over practice, myth over ritual, thought over action, and mind over body."[163] The transformational rituals, such as the *mīs pî /pīt pî* ritual were very important for the ancient Mesopotamian conceptual framework. In attacking these rituals as they did, the Israelite authors demonstrated that they understood their focus and, thus, their importance. These rituals addressed the very same "weaknesses" which the Israelite polemics targeted: the cult image's human and earthly origin.

As we have seen, the *mīs pî* ritual was a significant attempt to distance the cult image from its human, earthly origin.[164] Thus, at a critical point in the ritual, the cultic image was separated from the workshop and the workers who crafted it. At

Symbol: Pictorial Representation of Deities in Mesopotamia and the Biblical Image Ban (OBO 213; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 181.

160 Y. Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), 20.

161 "Their whole condemnation revolves around the taunt of fetishism" (Kaufmann, *Religion*, 14).

162 Kaufmann, *Religion*, 17.

163 Levtow, *Images*, 23. Just as Bahrani regards strict distinctions made between "the real" and "the representational" (or "what we might call imaginary") as anachronistic, so Levtow helpfully corrects the "thought/action dichotomy" in the analysis of ritual.

164 In a text describing the process of remaking and consecration of cultic images, Esarhaddon is said to have prayed, "Whose right is it, O great gods, to create gods and goddesses in a place where humans dare not trespass" (Renewal of the Gods, line 14). Translation in Walker and Dick, *Induction*, 25; for text, see R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons, Königs von Assyrien* [AfO 9; Graz: Im Selbstverlage des Herausgebers 1956], §53, AsBbA Rs. 2 – 38).

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this stage the statue was "brought to the riverbank, where it was ritually regressed to the time it began as a tree and watered, so that it could be reborn."[165] At the riverbank, the craftsmen's tools were thrown into the river ("the watery abode of Ea") and, later, the craftsmen had their hands ritually cut off:

> The workmen who worked on the statue…are present, and the goldsmith, apparently the last to work on the statue, is called upon first, has red wool and two other kinds bound around his right hand, a scarf for a turban around his left. The officiating priest then pretends to cut off the goldsmith's hand with a knife of tamarisk wood (the red wool symbolizes the blood), and the goldsmith swears an oath, saying: "The god Gushkinbanda, Ea of the goldsmiths, verily made it. I did not make it!"[166]

Each of the craftsmen responsible for the statue then took this oath (Nineveh Ritual Text, lines 181 – 186). The point of these ritual acts (i. e., the ritual regression, the throwing away of the tools, and the oath of the craftsmen) is clear: "the fact that the statue is the work of human hands is ritually denied and thus magically made non-existent, nullified."[167]

By documenting the various stages, means, and materials of the production of the divine image, the parodies rhetorically (re)connect the cult statue with the profane material, thus negating the efficacious nature of the ritual. Similarly, Levtow notes that "Israelite icon parodies are textual representations of ritual."[168] By this, Levtow means that the text itself represents a social act and reflects "literary and ritual acts of social formation."[169] He suggests that these polemics are "acts of discursive power" that play on the "configurations of social relations."[170] In other words, the Israelite idol parodies use motifs and terminology related to the Mesopotamian cultic rituals because they operate within a similar cultural/social framework as any ritual, cultic or otherwise, to actualize social power relations. Although outside his primary focus,[171] he notes that the parodies are power-plays of a conquered people much like the belief that a god would command his own defeat and exile at the hands of victorious enemies and

165 Dick, "Prophetic," 26; cf. Jacobsen, "Graven Image," 23. As Dick notes, this sequence may also explain the apparent illogical ordering of Isa 44:13 – 14, where the carpenter is described as going to the forest, cutting and nurturing the wood (v 14) after shaping the image (v. 13).

166 Jacobsen, "Graven Image," 23.

167 Jacobsen, "Graven Image," 23 – 24; cf. Dick, "Prophetic," 40.

168 Levtow, *Images*, 29 n.31.

169 Levtow, *Images*, 29 n.31.

170 Levtow, *Images*, 34.

171 Levtow's focus is not on the conceptual framework of the cult image or the importance of the ritual in that framework. Rather, he discusses the "literary representations of iconic cult discourse and political aspects to locate the *social dynamics* of Israelite iconic discourse within a wider ancient West Asian environment" (*Images*, 13 n.30 [italics mine]).

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his eventual re-enthronement.[172] But it is another analogy that hits closer to home. These polemics attack the divine images of Babylon, deconstructing them as if the conquered people were in fact the victors. In a sense, they capture them and, much like the Philistine statue of Dagon, render them powerless so that "they have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes but cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell" (Ps 115:5–6; cf. Jer 10:5).[173]

3.4 Conclusion

Although there is an increasing likelihood that, at some point in Israelite history, the pre-exilic cult did center on anthropomorphic images, certainty will never be possible. What we can be sure of, however, is that the Israelites did participate in practices that indicate belief in concepts embraced by cults that centered their worship on such images. "High place" worship, consisting of standing stones and stylized trees, is attested not only in the archaeological but also the biblical record. Both positive and polemical treatments of these cultic representations demonstrate that they were thought to function in ways similar to those of *ṣalmū* in Mesopotamia. The archaeological record documents the predominance of standing stones in pre-exilic Israel and, although the biblical record appears to make a distinction between different types of standing stones, such distinctions are becoming very difficult to maintain. In every instance, the stone appears to signal divine presence, whether as a witness or participant. The biblical record also describes these stones as being anointed and empowered to see and hear. Thus, there is no clear functional distinction between the conceptualization of standing stones in Israel and cultic images in Mesopotamia.

Similar conclusions can be reached when considering the place and function of stylized trees in pre-exilic Israel. Despite the biblical authors' complete condemnation of the אשרה, there are indications that such cultic representations were not always considered illicit. Thus, the multiple mentions of the אשרה as a continued target of the reformers attest to its persistence in the cult. More significant, however, is the apparent survival of Ahab's אשרה in the face of Jehu's cultic reform (2 Kgs 13:6). Unlike that of standing stones, the function of the אשרה is not explicit in the biblical text (see, however, מפלצת לאשרה in 1 Kgs 15:13 and פסל האשרה in 2 Kgs 21:7). Nevertheless, the archaeological record definitively identifies a goddess by a similar name, who functioned as El's consort in the Ugaritic pantheon. Moreover, the discovery of the Khirbet el-Qom and Kuntillet

172 Levtow, *Images*, 86–129.

173 Note that the STT 200 ritual text states that "[t]his statue without its mouth opened cannot smell incense, cannot eat food, nor drink water" (lines 43–44).

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'Ajrud inscriptions that attest to a connection between YHWH and Asherah point to the conclusion that the cultic representation functioned to make present the deity, be it YHWH or the goddess herself.

Moreover, within the varied traditions surrounding the ark, we find the presence of divine image conceptualizations. This is especially evident in the Ark Narrative (1 Sam 2, 4–6; 2 Sam 6), where the "aniconic" representation is referred to and treated in ways similar to the anthropomorphic image of Dagon. Like the iconic images of Mesopotamia, the ark functioned as the localized presence of YHWH, so that the ark's capture meant the capture of YHWH and the ark's return meant the return of YHWH. Even the interpretation of the capture and return of the ark reflects rhetoric widely used in ancient Near Eastern cults centered on divine images, where defeat was re-interpreted as an indication of the conquered god's anger with his people and the return as an indication of divine approval of the current political power.

Finally, and most significantly, the later exilic and post-exilic polemics against such cultic concepts demonstrate Israel's immersion in this type of rhetoric and belief. These polemics engage in the rhetoric of mutilation and destruction of cultic representations, as well as the erasure and re-inscription of divine names. Most telling, however, is the explicit denial that a humanly crafted statue can ever become a living god. In its most expansive and detailed form, these denials constitute a rhetorical deconstruction of the specific Mesopotamian rituals thought to transform the dead statue into a living god. Just as the Mesopotamian rituals sought to distance the statue from its human, earthly origin, so the Israelite parodies target these exact characteristics rhetorically reconnecting the cult image with the profane material.

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4. The Image of God in the Hebrew Bible

4.1 Genesis 1: Humanity as the Image of God[1]

4.1.1 Introduction

In previous chapters, we demonstrated that the broader Near Eastern conceptualization that divine presence could be manifested by material images is reflected in ancient Israel. The reflection of this belief, however, is often found in the negative commentary regarding "foreign" (i. e. non-Israelite) cultic practices. In this and the following chapters, we will demonstrate that these opinions were not universally held in ancient Israel. At least three texts portray the conceptualization that material images could manifest the presence of god in positive terms. Yet, as we shall see, these positive attestations were limited to a certain type of material image – humans.

4.1.2 History of Research

The biblical notion that all humanity was made בצלם אלהים ("in/as the image of God," Gen 1:26 – 28; 9:3; cf. 5:1 – 3) has received a lot of attention over the centuries. Indeed, the secondary literature is so voluminous that at least one monograph has been dedicated to one hundred years of the research alone.[2] It

1 There is a general consensus that the Priestly creation account runs from Gen 1:1 – 2:4a. See, e. g., D. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 74 – 5, 317; Cross, *CMHE*, 301 – 5; M. Vervenne, "Genesis 1,1 – 2:4: The Compositional Texture of the Priestly Overture to the Pentateuch," in *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History* (ed. A. Wénin; BETL 155; Leuven: Leuven University, 2001), 35 – 79; T. Stordalen, "Genesis 2, 4: Restudying a *locus classicus*," *ZAW* 104 (1992), 163 – 77. This source division is not denied here. For simplicity, however, I will refer to the entirety of the Priestly creation account as Genesis 1.

2 G. A. Jónsson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26 – 28 in a Century of Old Testament Research* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1988). See also the summaries in C. West-

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would therefore be impossible to provide an exhaustive review of the scholarship at this point. Rather, our survey will be selective and representative, focusing primarily on the influence of extra-biblical materials on the interpretation of this important expression. Our aim will therefore be to highlight the various conclusions that have been drawn from these parallels, so that we may locate our reading and understanding of the expression in the history of research.

W. Beyerlin notes that before the middle of the nineteenth century, no significant traditions were known from the world of the Old Testament, i. e. the ancient Near East.[3] Even after scholars began to recognize the existence of parallels between the Hebrew Bible and other ancient Near Eastern texts, however, they were primarily viewed as a threat to the notion of the revelatory character of the biblical accounts.[4] Given the uniqueness of the expression צלם אלהים in the Hebrew Bible, "one would quite rightly expect that the discovery of the extra-biblical comparative material might hold the key to the progress of the interpretation of these passages."[5] Nevertheless, the negative attitude toward the newly found, comparative material kept the expression firmly in the grip of Systematic Theology until the middle of the last century.[6]

4.1.2.1 History of Scholarship before 1960

Before the middle of the twentieth century, the dominant understanding of the expression צלם אלהים was the so-called "immaterial" or "spiritual" interpretation.[7] According to this interpretation, humanity's likeness to God consists in certain spiritual capacities, which distinguish it from the rest of the created order. Thus, for example, F. Delitzsch emphasizes humanity's "mastery of self" exhibited in its self-conscious and self-determining powers.[8] Likewise, A. Dill-

ermann, *Genesis 1 – 11* (trans. J. J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984), 147 – 155; Curtis, *Man*, 4 – 39; J. R. Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005).

3 W. Beyerlin (ed.), *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (trans. J. Bowden; OTL; London: SCM, 1978), xxi.

4 Cf. Jónsson, *Image*, 43 – 44, 199. S. R. Driver's statement on this issue is illuminating in that he recognizes the material similarities between ancient Israel and the surrounding cultures and even the likelihood of "borrowing." Yet, he states, "religiously, there was a great gulf fixed, which if possible, has been widened rather than narrowed by the new knowledge which has come to us" (*Modern Research as Illustrating the Bible* [London: Oxford University, 1909], 89 – 90).

5 Jónsson, *Image*, 199.

6 Westermann, *Genesis 1 – 11*, 148.

7 According to Curtis, the immaterial or spiritual interpretation was "virtually the only one found among Christian interpreters (both Catholic and Protestant) prior to the middle of the nineteenth century…[and] is also found among some medieval Jewish scholars and…many modern Jewish scholars including B. Jacob and U. Cassuto" (*Man*, 44).

8 *A New Commentary on Genesis* (trans. S. Taylor; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888 – 1889), 100.

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mann argues that since "God is spirit…(with) no material shape… the likeness is not first of all and pre-eminently to be sought for in the outward appearance of man." Instead, for Dillmann, humanity is like God in its "mental endowment (power of thought, self-consciousness, freedom of will)" and its "capacity for the eternal, the true and the good."[9]

A minority position held prior to the middle of the twentieth century argues that the expression primarily refers to the physical resemblance between God and humanity. The two scholars who are given pride of place for the "physical" interpretation, T. Nöldeke and H. Gunkel, came to the conclusion independently[10] and through different channels. Nöldeke emphasizes etymology and word-studies, in which extra-biblical comparative materials remain naturally important, while Gunkel makes use of extra-biblical parallels in his emphasis on an older tradition lying behind Genesis 1:26 – 28.[11] During this same period, P. Humbert and L. Köhler also espouse a physical interpretation based primarily on detailed word studies. Humbert, for example, concludes that "…tous les passages de l'Ancien Testament où il est question de צֶלֶם entendent par là uniquement l'effigie extérieure, la representation plastique, sans extension morale ou spirituelle du terme."[12] He also maintains that the Priestly author uses

9 *Genesis Critically and Exegetically Expounded* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897), 81 – 82; cf. O. Procksch, *Die Genesis* (Leipzig, 1913), 432.

10 Jónsson points out that many make the incorrect assumption that Gunkel was dependent on Nöldeke since "Gunkel's Genesis commentary from 1901 and Nöldeke's article of 1897 are normally cited as the first important representatives of this interpretation." Yet Gunkel's view on this matter was already present in his *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* published in 1895 (*Image*, 44).

11 Both scholars, however, used Gen 5:1 – 3 as a key text for their explanation of Gen 1:26 – 28. Gunkel, for example, concludes that "…der Sohn sieht aus wie der Vater, er gleicht ihm an Gestalt und Aussehen. Danach ist also auch der erste Satz [Gen 1:26, 27] zu deuten: der erste Mensch ist Gott ähnlich an Gestalt und Aussehen." ("…the son looks like the father, he resembles him in form and appearance. Thus also the first sentence is to be interpreted: the first man is similar to God in form and appearance") (*Genesis: übersetzt und erklärt* [6th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964], 112). Interestingly, Nöldeke's etymological study actually rejects the Akkadian etymological parallels put forward earlier by Friedrich Delitzsch (*Prolegomena eines neuen hebräisch-aramäischen Wörterbuchs* [Leipzig, 1886], 140 – 41 n.4) and instead compares צלם to the Arabic *ṣalama,* "cut off" or "cut out" as a carving or sculpture (Schnitzbild) and, on the analogy between פסל and פֶּסֶל, where the latter means something cut out, concludes that, "צלם ist zunächst ein plastisches Bild; so z. B. Gen. 5, 3 (wonach natürlich auch Gen. 1, 27 zu beurtheilen)." ("צלם is first a plastic image, cf. Gen 5:3 (according to which naturally Gen 1, 27 should also be assessed)" ("Review of Friedr. Delitzsch's Hebrew-Aramaic Dictionary," *ZDMG* 40 [1886], 733). This argument is presented in a fuller form in his 1897 article "צַלְמָוֶת und צֶלֶם," *ZAW* 17 (1897), 183 – 187. There, for instance, Nöldeke explicitly asserts that there must have been a Hebrew verb צלם, "cut out."

12 "…all the passages of the Old Testament understand צֶלֶם only as an external image, a plastic representation, without any moral or spiritual extension of the term" (P. Humbert, *Études sur le récit du paradis et de la chute dans la Genese* [Neuchâtel: Secrétariat de l'Université, 1940], 157).

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the more abstract דמות in Genesis 1:26 and 5:1 – 3 precisely to lessen the impact of צלם so that the entire passage implies not an exact copy but a resemblance.[13] Köhler agrees with Humbert's assessment that צלם refers to humanity's external form and that דמות weakens the exactness of the resemblance between humans and the divine. More notably, he extends Humbert's study of Semitic parallels, concluding: "[a]n all diesen Stellen ist 'Gestalt' die richtige Übersetzung und eigentlich gemeint."[14]

The impact of Humbert's *Études sur le récit du paradis et de la chute dans la Genèse* cannot be overstated. Jónsson calls it "[o]ne of the most influential *imago Dei* studies in OT research."[15] Its impact was such that scholars such as J.J. Stamm consider 1940 as the year when the physical interpretation of the expression began to dominate the field.[16] Nevertheless, not many followed Humbert's decidedly one-sided interpretation. Most scholars favoring the physical interpretation did so only in an inclusive sense. For example, G. von Rad's emphasis on the physical nature of צלם did not exclude the spiritual: "…one will do well to split the physical from the spiritual as little as possible: the whole man is created in God's image."[17] These insights were also felt among those holding to the immaterial interpretation, so that it became increasingly difficult to deny a physical interpretation of the expression. The result was an eventual near consensus that the biblical expression describes the "whole man" and cannot be neatly separated into a physical or spiritual dimension. Indeed, such conclusions can be found in the writings of von Rad, Vriezen,[18] Barth,[19] J.J. Stamm,[20] W. H. Schmidt,[21] and G. E. Wright,[22] among many others.[23]

As a result of this consensus, many have emphasized the purpose of humanity's creation in the image of God. According to some, humanity was created in God's image in order to exist in relationship with him. This view is held, most

13 Humbert, *Études*, 165. This understanding of the function of דמות became standard in the field with few exceptions.

14 "[i]n all these references, shape is the correct translation and the actual meaning" (L. Köhler, "Die Grundstelle der Imago-Dei-Lehre," *ThZ* 4 [1948], 19). In his Old Testament Theology, Köhler observes already the increasing acceptance among scholars that the image of God consists in humanity's ruling over animals, plants and the earth (*Old Testament Theology* [trans. A. S. Todd; London: Lutterworth, 1957], 147).

15 Jónsson, *Image*, 101.

16 "Die Imago-Lehre von Karl Barth und die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft" in *Antwort: Karl Barth zum siebzigsten Geburstag am 10. Mai 1956* (Zürich, 1956), 88.

17 G. von Rad, *Genesis* (trans. J. H. Marks; OTL; London: SCM, 1961), 56.

18 "La création de l'homme d'après l'image de Dieu," *OTS* 2 (1943), 99.

19 *CD* 3:1, 184.

20 "Imago-Lehre," 98.

21 *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1964), 136.

22 "The Faith of Israel," *IB* 1:368.

23 For additional bibliography, see Westermann, *Genesis 1 – 11*, 150.

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famously, by K. Barth, who argues that the use of the plural "let us" in Genesis 1:26 and the creation of humanity in two sexes in Genesis 1:27 indicates that an "I-Thou relationship" exists, first of all, between the persons of the Trinity and, second, between man and woman.[24] The meaning of צלם אלהים is then found in the human capability of communing with God and others: "[God] willed the existence of a being which…can be a real partner; which is capable of action and responsibility in relation to Him…"[25]

Others, during this time-period, argue that the importance of the expression is found not in the ontological make-up of humanity but in its function as ruler over the created order. In contrast to the relational interpretation, this view finds its primary support in extra-biblical, comparative studies of Mesopotamian and Egyptian literature, where the king functioned as the representative of god.[26] Von Rad is an early adherent of this interpretation.[27] He concludes, for example, that the biblical expression contains no direct information about the form that specifically constitutes it; the point is found in the purpose for which the image is given:

> P only becomes clear and explicit when it speaks about the purpose of this image of God in man, that is, the function committed to man in virtue of it, namely, his status as lord in the world… it was in that sense that Israel thought of man as the representative of God.[28]

24 Barth, *CD* 3:1, 187 ff.

25 Barth, *CD* 3:1, 184 – 185. Although Barth is familiar with the parallels between the Genesis 1 account and, for example, *Enuma Elish*, he remains skeptical of their importance regarding the meaning of the text: "Everything is so different that the only choice is either to see in the Jewish rendering a complete caricature of the Babylonian, or in the Babylonian a complete caricature of the Jewish, according to the standpoint adopted" (*CD* 3:1, 89). Indeed, in his detailed study of the phrase "image and likeness of God," he does not mention extra-biblical parallels at all (see esp., *CD* 3:1, 197 f.).

26 Somewhat overlooked at the time, Hehn's 1915 article, "Terminus," was to play an important role in the following decades (Westermann, *Genesis 1 – 11*, 151) and marked "the first detailed study of the relationship between the *imago Dei* passages and extra-biblical material" (Jónsson, *Image*, 56). Although Hehn offers only passing reference to the Old Testament texts, he does demonstrate that the statue in Babylon could be divinized and, thus, stand in for the deity that it represented and that the king in Egypt could be described by the same terminology.

27 Cf. W. Caspari, "Imago divina Gen I," in *Festschrift R. Seeberg* (ed. W. Koepp; 2 vols.; Leipzig: A. Deichert/Werner Scholl, 1929), 1:208; D. T. Asselin, "The Notion of Dominion in Genesis 1 – 3," *CBQ* 16 (1954), 293 – 94.

28 G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962 – 5), 1:146 – 7; cf. *idem*, "εικων," *TDNT* 2:392; *Genesis*, 56, 58.

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4.1.2.2 History of Scholarship After 1960

During the 1960's a spate of highly influential studies reflect this "functional" interpretation. These studies then set the stage for what is, at present, the most dominant interpretation of צלם אלהים.[29] Among the more important of these studies is Schmidt's discussion in his *Alttestamentlicher Glaube in seiner Umwelt: Zur Geschichte des alttestamentlichen Gottesverständnisses*[30] and H. Wildberger's "Das Abbild Gottes Gen 1:26 – 30."[31] Schmidt suggests that, given the relative scarcity of the expression "image of God" in Israelite literature (Gen 1:26 f.; 5:1 ff.; 9:6; cf. Ps. 8:5 ff.), the concept was likely borrowed. He then turns to the ancient Near Eastern material, both Egyptian and Mesopotamian. Schmidt does not explicitly state his preference for one of these cultures over the other, but he recognizes that in both cultures the concept depicts the representative status of the king: "Just as the ancient Near Eastern king as the 'image of God' represents the deity upon earth, man as the image of God is an attestation of God upon earth."[32] Further, he states,

> It remains clear from the origin of the tradition that the image of God is not part, or a feature, that is to be sought in, or on, man; it rather goes with man's being the creation of God…The likeness to the image of God is not related therefore specially to the spiritual character of man, nor to his bodily posture, but as with the king, to his 'office', his position in the world.[33]

Thus, for Schmidt, one cannot separate the concept and the commission; they are intimately related. He does not doubt that the expression "image of God" locates the presence of God in the world ("so that it includes simultaneously situation and function"), but he sees the only contextually clear definition in the commission: "As representative of God, man is God's governor upon earth."[34] Likewise, Wildberger uses both Egyptian and Mesopotamian comparative material to underscore his conclusion that the expression in Genesis 1 is ultimately rooted in the royal ideology of the ancient Near East.[35] He also recognizes the

29 Jónsson suggests four main reasons for this dominance: 1) an emphasis on the holistic view of man; 2) an emphasis on the contextual principle; 3) word studies falling out of favor; and 4) an emphasis on ecological concerns.

30 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1968); Eng. tr.: *The Faith of the Old Testament: A History* (trans. J. Sturdy; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983); cf. *idem*, *Schöpfungsgeschichte*, 127 – 148.

31 *TZ* 21 (1965), 245 – 259, 481 – 501; cf. H. Gross, "Die Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen," in *Lex Tua Veritas* (ed. H. Gross and F. Mußner; Trier: Paulinus, 1961), 89 – 100, esp. 98; D. J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *TynB* 19 (1968), 53 – 103.

32 Schmidt, *Faith*, 197.

33 Schmidt, *Faith*, 197.

34 Schmidt, *Faith*, 198. Schmidt also suggests that the Priestly source democratizes what was applicable only to a specific few (i. e. kings and priests) in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

35 "Abbild," 255. Regarding Schmidt and Wildberger's articles, Westermann remarks that "it is impressive that two scholars have studied the same comparative texts at almost the same

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lexical similarity between the Hebrew צלם and the Akkadian *ṣalmu*,[36] yet argues that, conceptually, the relationship with Egyptian royal ideology is the more apt.[37]

It is interesting that despite recognizing that the Akkadian *ṣalmu* offers the closest cognate to the Hebrew צלם, many prefer to interpret the Hebrew expression in the light of the Egyptian background. The primary reason for this appears to be the greater prevalence that the concept had in Egypt in comparison to Mesopotamia. Most scholars admit, for instance, that in both cultures the term can be applied to humans and that, in both cultures, it is the image as representation of the deity that provides the basis for understanding this description applied to humans.[38] More recently, however, E. Curtis argues that the Egyptian background is more plausible due also to the negative attitude towards images in the Hebrew Bible:

> [A] negative attitude toward images was clearly in place by the eighth century BCE, and it is also clear that the word *ṣelem* was used in the meaning "image, idol, statue" by that time. Thus it seems doubtful that a word with the negative connotations that surely were associated with the term *ṣelem* at the time of the Exile would…have been accepted into Israel's tradition as late as the Exile.[39]

Curtis concludes, therefore, that such a transfer must have taken place before such contemptuous connotations would have attached themselves to the term. He suggests that if the term did originate from Mesopotamia then its adoption could only have occurred during the "pre-Patriarchal" period or through "various periods of historical contact" between Israel and Assyria.[40] Given its greater prevalence, however, the Egyptian route is the more plausible in Curtis' judgment. For the circumstances that would allow such a transfer, Curtis resorts to the biblical tradition of Moses' education in Pharaoh's court and the period of Israel's bondage in Egypt.[41] As J. Kutsko points out, however, Curtis' attempt to find a point-in-time before any negative connotations would have been associated with the word צלם forces his thesis into a "strained historical argument"

time and have come to the same conclusion about their contribution to the explanation of the biblical texts" (*Genesis 1 – 11*, 152). One could say much the same about many of the studies during this period.

36 Wildberger, "Abbild," 255; cf. Clines, "Image," 83 – 84.

37 Wildberger, "Abbild," 484 – 5. As Jónsson notes, Wildberger's more definite position on Egyptian influences in the Hebrew Bible is indicative of his great interest in Israel's deliverance from Egypt, which he claims held a position parallel to that of the cross in the New Testament (*Image*, 42; cf. Wildberger, "Auf dem Wege zu einer biblischen Theologie," *EvTh* 19 [1959], 89).

38 See, e. g., Curtis, *Man*, 331.

39 Curtis, *Man*, 342, 331.

40 Curtis, *Man*, 343.

41 Curtis, *Man*, 343. These biblical traditions also played a significant role for Wildberger ("Wege," 89).

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that "rests heavily on finding a window of opportunity"[42] and lacks any motivation or purpose for using what was otherwise a term with negative connotations in such a positive way.

It is precisely the negative attitude toward images that provides the proper motivation for the Priestly usage. Based on the similarities between Genesis 1 and the Mesopotamian mythic traditions, such as *Enuma Elish*, P. Bird argues that the Priestly creation story should be viewed as "an alternative, or counter, myth" that should be read as a polemic.[43] Further, J. M Miller notes that the similarities between Genesis 1 and Mesopotamian literature are close enough to suggest "direct Mesopotamian influence" and that the most likely time for such direct influence would have been "during or soon after the Babylonian Exile."[44] Curtis, by contrast, fails to find a "motive" for the borrowed terminology, looking instead for a window of opportunity for its entrance into the biblical tradition. However, once the polemical nature of the passage is recognized, "we are not confined to finding a pre-negative milieu. Quite the opposite is true: the Priestly formulation intended to contradict its common usage."[45] In other words, what attracted the Priestly author to this expression was precisely its usage in Mesopotamia, as a response to the Mesopotamian ideology and theology encountered in exile.

As we have seen, the conceptualization of images in Mesopotamia is complex and can be compared to conceptualizations of the Eucharist in Orthodox and Roman Catholic theology. In both cases, the divide between what is "real" and what is "representation" is not at all apparent. Thus, Jacobsen argues that the Mesopotamian statue "mystically becom[es] what it represents, the god, with-

42 Kutsko, *Between*, 62. Kutsko correctly points out that Curtis' reliance on "the Moses traditions as providing that window of opportunity raises serious historical difficulties." This says nothing about the difficulties presented by the alternative possibility, mentioned by Curtis, that the time of transfer occurred during the "pre-Patriarchal" period.

43 P. Bird, "'Male and Female He Created Them': Gen 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation," *HTR* 74 (1981), 143.

44 J. M. Miller, "In the 'Image' and 'Likeness' of God," *JBL* 91 (1972), 290; cf. Kutsko, *Between*, 63; Crüsemann, *Torah*, 277 – 301; Albertz, *History,* esp. 481 – 2. After listing the basic similarities and dissimilarities between Genesis 1 – 11 and the "Mesopotamian documents," Miller states: "In short, the priestly writer seems to have affirmed the order of primeval events presupposed by the Mesopotamian myths…Yet he radically modified the basic concepts and motifs…and substituted details from his own Hebrew heritage" ("'Image,'" 303).

45 Kutsko, *Between*, 62. The extensive use of Mesopotamian traditions and motifs in the Gen 1 creation account has long been noticed. See, e.g., H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung*; W.G. Lambert, "A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis," *JTS* 16:2 (1965), 287 – 300; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB; N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964); Miller, "'Image,'" 289 – 304; J. W. Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974); Westermann, *Genesis 1 – 11*; Sarna, *Genesis*; J. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 19 – 42; Blenkinsopp, *Pentateuch*, 54 – 97; Bird, "Male," 129 – 59.

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out, however, in any way limiting the god, who remains transcendent" and that through this process "the statue ceases to be mere earthly wood, precious metal and stones, ceases to be the work of human hands. It becomes transubstantiated, a divine being, the god it represents."[46] The Israelite authors of the exilic and post-exilic prophetic parodies understood both the importance of and the problems inherent in the belief that an inanimate piece of wood or stone could become a deity. The evidence for this is found in the specific attacks that intentionally deconstructed the very ritual thought to bring about such a result. The Priestly polemic, however, follows a different route. According to A. Schüle,

> It is remarkable that very much at the same time when prophets like Deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel poured scorn on the idols, the idea of the "Image of God" was very much alive in another strand of biblical tradition that is probably about contemporaneous with these prophets: according to the priestly telling of creation in Gen 1,1 – 2,4a it is not lifeless matter, not a man-made statue, but humans as living beings that are envisioned to be indeed the true image of God.[47]

Since Hehn's observations regarding the role and function of "images" in Mesopotamia and Egypt, many scholars recognize that the proper background for interpreting the Hebrew expression צלם אלהים is to be found in the ancient Near Eastern conceptualization of images. However, it was not until the middle of the twentieth century that such interpretations became common. The dominant opinion since that time has been that the expression refers, in essence, to the similarity in external form and, in purpose, to the similarity in function that exists between God and humanity. There has, however, been a minority of scholars, both past and present, who recognize the possibility that humanity in the Priestly tradition is portrayed according to the cultic aspect inherent in the images of the ancient Near East. Statements like "in P's theology human beings are what Israelite religion has in place of divine statues"[48] are not completely absent from the secondary literature. Unfortunately, such statements are often devoid of argument or mean simply that humanity has a certain form and/or a dignified status in the world.[49] That the image in Mesopotamia served to make present the referent (be it god, king, or priest) should not, however, be overlooked when considering the meaning of צלם אלהים. The Priestly conception of humanity as divine image is more than mere function, more than a raised status, but concerns the manifestation of divine presence as well.

46 Jacobsen, "Graven Image," 22 – 3.
47 Schüle, "Image of God," 2.
48 Sommer, *Bodies*, 70.
49 See, however, Schüle, "Image of God," 6; Niehr, "Search," 93 – 94; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "The Worship of Divine Humanity as God's Image and the Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism* (ed. C. Newman, J. D. Davila and G. S. Lewis; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 112 – 28; Herring, "'Transubstantiated,'" 480 – 94.

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4.1.3 בצלם אלהים

The Priestly use of צלם does reflect a conceptualization of presence similar to its Akkadian cognate *ṣalmu*. Although there is nothing so elaborate as the *mīs pî* ritual in the Hebrew Bible,[50] this conclusion is supported by other evidence, including the context surrounding Genesis 1:26 – 27, the literary style of the verses in question, and the relationship between these verses, Genesis 5:3, and 9:6.

4.1.3.1 Near Eastern Background of Genesis 1

The conclusion that the Genesis 1 creation account "stands toward the end of a long chain of tradition whose beginnings lie outside Israel altogether" is well established.[51] Indeed, since G. Smith's publication of the Babylonian Epic of Creation (*Enuma Elish*) in 1876,[52] many scholars recognize that Genesis 1 is related in some fashion to it.[53] *Enuma Elish* describes how Marduk created the universe by defeating Tiamat and cutting her body into two parts to form the top and bottom of the perceivable world and provide a spatial context for the creation of heavenly bodies and humanity. Although humanity was the design of the god Ea, Marduk implements the plan in part through the blood of Qingu, an ally of Tiamat. In the light of these deeds, Marduk is elevated to the top of the pantheon and builds his temple, Esagila, in Babylon. The myth played an important role in certain rituals in Babylon, including the *akītu*, the Babylonian New Year's festival, where it was recited before Marduk on the fourth day of the festival (4th Nisan).[54]

50 Schüle, however, compares certain aspects of Genesis 2 – 3 with the ritual ("Image of God," 11 – 20).

51 See, e. g., J. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: the Jewish drama of Divine Omnipotence* (London: Harper & Row, 1988), 68; and, more recently, M. S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).

52 G. Smith, *The Chaldean Account of Genesis* (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1876).

53 See, e. g., A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963); Speiser, *Genesis*, 8 – 13; B. F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 73 – 101; H. Gunkel, *Genesis: Translated and Interpreted* (trans. M. Biddle; Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1997), 102 – 33; J. McKenzie, "Myth and the Old Testament," *CBQ* 21 (1959), 277 – 78; L. Ruppert, *Genesis: Ein kritischer und theologischer Kommentar 1. Teilband: Genesis 1,1 – 11,26* (Würzburg: Echter, 1992), 61 – 63; K. L. Sparks, "*Enūma Elish* and the Priestly Mimesis: Elite Emulation in Nascent Judaism," *JBL* 126:4 (2007), 625 – 648; B. Halpern, "Assyrian Astronomy of Genesis 1 and the Birth of Milesian Philosophy," *Erets-Israel* 27 (2003), 74*-83*; Levenson, *Creation*; Smith, *Priestly*. Although Smith is less sure of any formal dependence, he recognizes many parallels between the two accounts and admits the possibility (184 – 85).

54 There is also evidence that the myth was recited on the fourth day of Kislīmu. See K. van der

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Regarding the comparative ordering of the two creation accounts, A. Heidel has famously presented the following tabulation:[55]

Enuma elish	*Genesis*
Divine Spirit and cosmic matter are coexistent and coeternal	Divine spirit creates cosmic matter and exists independently of it
Primeval chaos; Ti'amat enveloped in darkness	The earth a desolate waste, with darkness covering the deep (*těhōm*)
Light emanating from the gods	Light created
The creation of the firmament	The creation of the firmament
The creation of dry land	The creation of dry land
The creation of luminaries	The creation of luminaries
The creation of man	The creation of man
The gods rest and celebrate	The gods rest and celebrate

To Heidel's structural similarities, we may add K. Sparks' convenient summary of the comparable thematic similarities:

> Both *Enūma Elish* and P's creation story are introduced by a temporal clause: in the first instance by "When on high" and in the second by "In the beginning." In *Enūma Elish* Marduk defeated the waters of Tiamat; in Genesis God tames the waters of תהום (*těhôm*). In *Enūma Elish* creation was initiated by the splitting of watery Tiamat; in Genesis God did so by separating the waters. In *Enūma Elish* the creation of heaven and earth was followed by the creation of the heavenly bodies and humanity; the same counts for Genesis. In its description of creation, *Enūma Elish* accentuates Marduk's role in establishing the boundaries of the created order, not only of space (such as the structures that hold back the heavenly waters) but also of time, which is marked off by the stars and heavenly bodies; Yahweh does the same in Genesis. In *Enūma Elish* humanity was created from the blood of a slain god, while in Genesis humanity was created in God's image.[56]

Not all, however, are convinced that a formal relationship exists between the two accounts.[57] There are, in fact, a number of important differences. Humanity, for

Toorn, "The Babylonian New Year Festival: New Insights from the Cuneiform Texts and Their Bearing on Old Testament Study," in *Congress Volume: Leuven 1989* (ed. J. A. Emerton; Leiden: Brill, 1991), 337; cf. W. G. Lambert, "Myth and Ritual as Conceived by the Babylonians," *JSS* 13 (1968), 107. For this ritual text, see G. Cagirgan and W. G. Lambert, "The Late Babylonian Kislīmu Ritual for Esagil," *JCS* 43 – 45 (1991 – 93), 89 – 106.

55 Heidel, *Babylonian*, 129; cf. Speiser, who states, "[e]xcept for incidental differences of opinion in regard to the exact meaning of the first entry in each column…the validity of this listing is not open to question" (*Genesis*, 10). Nevertheless, many have questioned the parallels. Perhaps the most common objection is that the actions of the third row are not really parallels at all. In fact, in *Enuma Elish* the "light emanating from the gods" is 1) not created and 2) not even discussed in the context of creation. For a recent defense of this parallel, however, see Smith, who argues that the light of Gen 1:3 should be understood as an uncreated, divine light corresponding to the כבוד of the tabernacle (*Priestly*, 71 – 9).

56 Sparks, "Priestly Mimesis," 630 – 31.

57 See, e. g., Lambert, "New Look," 287 – 300; V. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1 – 17* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 110 – 11; G. Wenham, *Genesis 1 – 11* (WBC; Waco: Word,

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instance, has a more dignified role in Genesis than in Mesopotamia. In both *Enuma Elish* and *Atrahasis*, humans were made from the blood of a rebel god in order to do the work of the gods (to give them rest). In Genesis 1, however, humans are not only created in the divine image, they are served by creation (vv. 29 f.) and are to rule over it (v. 28). Perhaps the most significant contrast between the two accounts is that the conflict motif, which is so important in *Enuma Elish*, is absent in Genesis 1. While *Enuma Elish* presents the creation of the world as a result of Marduk's defeat of Tiamat, "creation without opposition" is a more accurate description of the theology underlying the Genesis passage. Rather than "chaotic," the waters in Genesis 1 are inert ("they are simply there"[58]) and offer no resistance to God.[59] Nevertheless, like *Enuma Elish*, the waters are still "transformed during the act of creation."[60] They are separated and limited, becoming "a positive part of creation."[61] Yet, this should not be taken as evidence that the author of Genesis 1 lacked the knowledge or belief that chaos existed or needed to be controlled. In Genesis 1, "the waters have been not only neutralized but demythologized and even depersonalized…[t]hey have not, however, been eliminated."[62] Instead, Genesis 1 appears to begin where the action of *Enuma Elish* ends "with the primordial waters neutralized and the victorious and unchallengeable deity about to undertake the work of cosmogony."[63]

1987), 8; Westermann, *Genesis 1 – 11*, 89; R. J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994), 140 – 41.

58 Smith, *Priestly*, 60.

59 Cf. J. Levenson, *Creation,* 122; W. Brown, *The Ethos of the Cosmos: the Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 42; J. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and The Old Testament* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), 199; D. Tsumura, *The Earth and Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation* (JSOTSupp. 83; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989), 45 – 83, 156 – 59. Tsumura argues that the תהום of Genesis 1 does not represent even a demythologized Tiamat, since the former is not an Akkadian loanword but is in fact a native Hebrew word. However, as Sparks observes: "This argument does not hold. There is nothing whatsoever to preclude a Hebrew author using his own term, תהום, in a polemic against the obviously related cognate term Tiamat" ("Priestly Mimesis," 630 n.14). Smith, likewise, notes that the term appears in both Ugaritic god-lists and mythological contexts (*Priestly*, 69).

60 Levenson, *Creation*, 122.

61 Smith, *Priestly*, 60. In this case, the waters function as a home to sea creatures (vv. 20 – 23). J. Walton argues, quite convincingly, that ancient creation accounts do share a similar ontology; they are "function-oriented": "[T]o create something would mean to give it a function or a role within an ordered cosmos" (*Thought*, 181). This would, then, include naming, giving roles, separating, and decreeing destinies.

62 Levenson, *Creation*, 122.

63 Levenson, *Creation*, 122. In Gen 1, the divine conflict appears to have been replaced by divine speech and wind. Yet, even here, there may be a connection with *Enuma Elish*. In the latter, Marduk utilizes the winds to defeat Tiamat just before splitting her body to form the sky and the earth. Likewise, subsequent to the splitting of the waters in Gen 1, we read that the earth

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Further, the distinctive, Priestly anthropological and theological outlook explains many of the differences between Genesis 1 and *Enuma Elish*. Whereas in *Enuma Elish* humanity is created from the blood of Qingu, Tiamat's ally, Genesis 1 claims that humanity was created in the deity's image. Further, only in Genesis is creation seen as providing for humanity. Thus, humanity is bestowed with more dignity in Genesis 1. In terms of theology, just as the Priestly author replaced the personification of chaos (Tiamat) with the impersonal waters of תהום, so also did he collapse the independent roles of numerous deities into the actions of one god, אלהים.[64] The noticeable absence of other deities, then, served the same function as the absence of chaos: "The Priestly Writer has clearly articulated the belief that his God is the king, not only because he is the [sole] creator but because he has no rivals at all."[65]

It is certainly true that the evidence for a formal relationship between the two accounts is, on the whole, circumstantial. Yet such circumstantial evidence can be quite overwhelming. Other than the parallels between Genesis 1 and *Enuma Elish* cited above, there are a multitude of similarities between the biblical, Priestly material and Mesopotamian literature.[66] Thus, for instance, the Priestly re-telling of Israel's deliverance at Yam Suph (Ex 1 – 24)[67] concluding in the tabernacle construction narrative (Ex 25 – 40)[68] is very close, structurally

was "formless and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep (תהום) and a wind (רוח) from God hovering over the water" (v. 2; cf. Levenson, *Creation*, 121; Smith, *Priestly*, 54). Regarding the emphasis on divine speech, Batto has observed that in both Gen 1 and *Enuma Elish* there is "a stress upon the *power of the word* of the (chief) deity: Marduk controls destinies, making entities appear or disappear by his word alone; in Genesis 1 God makes creation appear by his mere word" (*Slaying*, 77 – 78).

64 As Sparks notes, "Ea and Marduk were replaced by Israel's God (who now served as both designer and creator of humanity), the personified waters of Tiamat were replaced by the impersonal waters of תהום, the hide of Tiamat was replaced by the inanimate רקיע ("firmament"), and the independent roles of Marduk and Qingu in creating human life were collapsed into the one God who both creates and animates life" ("Priestly Mimesis," 631 – 32).

65 Sparks, "Priestly Mimesis," 632.

66 Other than the examples provided below, many have also found parallels between the Priestly ancestor lists in Gen 5 and 11:10 ff., which frame the flood account, and the Sumerian "King's Lists" (cf. the later Babylonian "Dynastic Chronicle") as well as the description of the deluge and *Atrahasis*. Further, Batto compares the final episode in the Priestly flood story, the hanging of the bow in the sky (Gen 9:8 – 17), with Marduk hanging his warbow in the sky at the completion of his palace in *Enuma Elish* (*Slaying*, 87 – 88; cf. Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 62 – 3).

67 For the traditional assignment of Priestly verses in these chapters, see, e. g., B. Childs, *Exodus* (London: SCM, 1974); A. Campbell and M. O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 35 – 41.

68 The conceptual and linguistic connections between Gen 1 and Ex 25 – 40, esp. 39 – 40, are almost universally recognized, see, e. g., Levenson, *Creation*, 83 – 6; M. Weinfeld, "Sabbath, Temple and the Enthronement of the Lord: The Problem of the Sitz-im-Leben of Gen. 1:1 – 2:3," in *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles* (ed. A. Caquot and M. Delcor; AOAT 212; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1981), 501 – 11; J.

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speaking, to the plot line of *Enuma Elish*. Further, the Exodus account also features some prominent characteristics found in *Enuma Elish*.[69] Batto has brought out many of these characteristics in his comparison between Near Eastern myths and the Exodus tradition.[70] He argues, for instance, that one of the clearest indications that the Priestly story has adapted (and demythologized) Marduk's victory over Tiamat is the "splitting" (בקע) of the sea by means of the divine "wind" (רוח) in the Hebrew account (Ex 14:16, 21b; cf. Gen 8:1 – 2).[71] As we have seen, the separating of water by wind provides space for creation in both *Enuma Elish* and Genesis 1. In Exodus, also, the action provides space for the creation of Israel.[72] In *Enuma Elish*, the construction of Esagila is the crown and consummation of creation, the result of Marduk's cosmic victory over Tiamat. Likewise, the construction of YHWH's tabernacle is the crowning achievement of the Exodus, the result of YHWH's victory over Pharaoh/Egypt.[73]

Significantly, many recognize striking similarities between the Priestly annual atonement ritual in Leviticus 16 and the Mesopotamian *kuppuru* ritual, which was performed on the fifth day of the Babylonian *akītu* festival (5th Nisan), a day after the ritual recitation of *Enuma Elish*.[74] As in the Leviticus 16 ritual, the

Blenkinsopp, "The Structure of P," *CBQ* 38 (1976), 275 – 92; P. J. Kearney, "Creation and Liturgy: The P Redaction of Ex 25 – 40," *ZAW* 89 (1977), 373 – 87; G. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), 19 – 25; B. Janowski, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen* (2nd ed.; WMANT 55; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2000), 309 n.195 and 198; *idem*, *Gottes Gegenwart in Israel: Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1993), 223 – 4, 238 – 9; Blum, *Studien*, 306 – 7; C. Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch* (FAT 2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 54 – 5; Zenger, *Bogen*, 171.

69 Cross pointed out the mythological overtones of the Exodus tradition long ago, while defending the antiquity of Ex 15 by demonstrating the resurgence of the myths of creation and their ultimate synthesis into the Exodus tradition. Although he focused almost exclusively on the Canaanite myths, he does mention *Enuma Elish* as sharing these motifs (*CMHE*, 112 – 144).

70 Batto, *Slaying*, 102 – 127; cf. Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 60.

71 As Batto notes these features do not play such a significant role in earlier, non-priestly accounts of the Exodus (*Slaying*, 110; cf. Cross, *CMHE*, 132, 140; Sparks, "Priestly Mimesis," 637; Nihan, 60).

72 Sparks, "Priestly Mimesis," 637. Sparks suggests that "[a] further connection between Exodus and Enūma Elish may be implied by P's creation story in Genesis 1, which makes no great distinction between the waters of תהום and ים. One could easily argue that the author means for them to be understood as equivalent, in which case we have in Exodus the same pattern as in Genesis: a subtle parallel between the waters of Tiamat and תהום (= ים)."

73 Sparks also compares the painstaking detail of the tabernacle's "blueprint" with Mesopotamian topographical texts ("Priestly Mimesis," 637 – 42). For a description of Egypt and Pharaoh as the mythological Sea Dragon in the Hebrew Bible, see Batto, *Slaying*, 217 – 218 n.21.

74 For a comparison between these two rituals, see, e. g., Sparks, "Priestly Mimesis," 632 – 35; J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1 – 16* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1071 – 79; D. Wright, *Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature* (SBLDS

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Mesopotamian rite was an annual purification of the temple (v. 34). Both required the fumigation and sprinkling of the sanctuary (vv. 11 – 16; lines 340 – 52), the ritual slaughter of an animal and the purification of the temple precinct with its blood (vv. 15 ff.; lines 353 – 54).[75] In both cases, the animal's body was removed from the temple precinct: in the *kuppuru*, it is thrown into the river; in the Israelite ritual it is burned (v. 27; lines 357 – 60). The participants in both rituals are rendered impure due to proximity with the carcass (vv. 21 – 22, 26, 28; lines 361 – 66), and, in both rituals, there is a related confession. In Israel, this confession is from the high priest (v. 21), while in Babylon it comes from the king (lines 423 – 28). Finally, the Mesopotamian ritual is referred to as *kuppuru* and the Israelite ritual, *kipper*; both words are morphologically and etymologically related.[76]

The purpose of these rituals is also similar. The Babylonian New Year's festival has for a long time been seen as a ritual attempt to influence events and reestablish cosmic, theological, social, and political order.[77] Likewise, F. Gorman

101; Atlanta: Scholars, 1987); M. Weinfeld, "Social and Cultic Institutions in the Priestly Source Against their Ancient Near Eastern Background," *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, August 16 – 21, 1981* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1982), 111 – 113; cf. Janowski, *Sühne*, 54 – 6, 265 – 74. For a detailed comparison of the two terms and a discussion of the relevant texts, see Janowski, *Sühne*, 29 – 60. For the text and translation of the *akītu*, see, most recently, M. J. H. Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon: The Temple Ritual Texts as Evidence for Hellenistic Cult Practices* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 215 – 37.

75 Weinfeld also notes that in both accounts the priests wake early and dress in linen and that Lev 16:16, 33 corresponds to the prescription that the Mesopotamian priest should purify the whole sanctuary, including its environs ("Social," 111 – 113; cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1 – 16*, 1067 – 1070).

76 Morphologically, both words share a common root *kpr* and both are in the D verbal stem. Etymologically, the Akkadian D-stem of *kpr* is used almost exclusively for ritual contexts with the meaning "purify cultically" (B. Lang, "כִּפֶּר," *TDOT* 7:290; cf. Sparks, "Priestly Mimesis," 634; J. Sklar, *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement* [Sheffield: Phoenix, 2005], 4; B. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord* [SJLA 5; Leiden: Brill, 1974], 60). Janowski distinguishes between two groups of biblical texts involving כפר: P, Ezek 40 – 48, and Chronicles, on the one hand, and the non-priestly texts, on the other. In general, he observes that, in the former texts, כפר is always found in ritual contexts (*Sühne*, 183 – 275), while the non-priestly use refers to interpersonal reconciliation and compensation (*Sühne*, 103 – 174). Sparks argues that the contrast between the action denoted by the priestly and non-priestly use of כפר may be the result of Mesopotamian influence ("Priestly Mimesis," 634). However, note Janowski's list of five major differences between the use of the Akkadian and the Hebrew term, including its use in P, Ezek 40 – 48, and Chronicles (*Sühne*, 58 – 60).

77 There are those, however, who dispute the cosmic significance of the *akītu*, see, e. g., J. Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982), 91 – 100; van der Toorn, "New Year," 331 – 44. More often than not, in these cases, the political impact of the ritual is emphasized. Certainly, there are many factors that make a political interpretation of the *akītu* difficult to deny: The divine approval of the king was proclaimed on 4, 8, and 11 of Nisan. Officials from outlying areas assisted at the ceremonies. If necessary, this was also the time when changes were made in administration, treaties were

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describes the Israelite Day of Atonement as a New Year festival concerned with the "annual reestablishment of the order of creation, an order consisting of cosmic, social, and cultic categories."[78] Leviticus 16 details the ritual manipulation of order, embodied in the high priest, who takes upon himself "categorically distinct states" (order/chaos, holy/profane, clean/unclean)[79] in order both to enter the inner sanctum and take on the sins of the nation (ultimately placing them on the scapegoat and banishing them into the wilderness, "the place of chaos").[80] These ritual enactments serve to restore the holiness of the tabernacle, through the elimination and cleansing of community sin and the removing of chaos.[81]

J. D. Levenson also notes the similarities between Leviticus 16 and the *kuppuru* ritual in his comparison of Genesis 1 and the *akītu*.[82] Levenson argues that the *akītu* may provide one of the few extra-biblical examples of creation over a period of several days. This comparison very much relies on the cultic interpretation of *Enuma Elish* in the *akītu*,[83] but also on a similar understanding of

regulated concerning royal succession, and amnesty was granted to political prisoners. However, given the cosmic ramifications of kingship in the ancient Near East, such interpretations are not incompatible with cosmic renewal. For a recent defense of the cosmic interpretation of the *akītu*, see B. Sommer, "The Babylonian Akitu Festival: Rectifying the King or Renewing the Cosmos?" *JANES* 27 (2000), 82 – 95.

78 F. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology* (JSOTSup 91; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 101.

79 Gorman, *Ideology*, 90 – 4.

80 "Aaron embodies the breakdown of the normal boundaries of order and structure in his marginal status in order that through the ritual he enacts he may reconstruct the world of order and meaning and well-being" (Gorman, *Ideology*, 94).

81 To be sure, there are differences. The "scapegoat" ritual in Lev 16 finds its closest parallels in elimination rites in Eblaite and Hittite sources from the late third and second millennia, thus underscoring the likelihood that "an older substrate of native Israelite ritual is still visible in the text" (Sparks, "Priestly Mimesis," 635; cf. I. Zatelli, "The Origin of the Biblical Scapegoat Ritual: The Evidence of Two Eblaite Texts," *VT* 48 [1998], 254 – 63; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1 – 16*, 1071 – 79; Wright, *Disposal*, 31 – 60 [Hittite texts], 62 – 74 [Mesopotamian texts]). Milgrom also notes that the "scapegoat" "was originally a discrete elimination technique that was artificially attached to the sanctuary purgation in order to focus on Israel's moral failings rather than on the sins and impurities that polluted the sanctuary" (*Leviticus 1 – 16*, 1069). Further, and perhaps more significantly, in Israel the high priest confesses his sin and the sin of the people, while in Babylon it was the Mesopotamian king who declares, "I am innocent." These differences show that such ceremonies were conditioned by local concerns and native theology. In Israel, the high priest acts as the representative of the people and through his actions maintains the presence of YHWH in the midst of Israel. In Mesopotamia, that burden falls to the king, who represents only himself and alone is responsible for maintaining Marduk's pleasure (cf. Weinfeld, "Social," 111 – 113).

82 Levenson, *Creation*, 70.

83 This interpretation of *Enuma Elish* has recently been questioned. Some suggest that a text detailing the recitation of the myth on the fourth day of the ninth month (Kislimu) deals "the severest blow" to the cultic interpretation of the myth in the *akītu*, since the recitation "may have been a monthly occurrence, having no specific relationship with the New Year Festival"

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Genesis 1. Levenson argues that neither creation account describes the "banishment of evil, but…its control."[84] Despite the passive character of the forces of nature in Genesis 1, these forces and the threat they present to life and order have not been eradicated. This is apparent even in other parts of the Priestly literature (e. g., Gen 6 – 9). As Levenson states, "the positive order of things associated with creation is not held to be intrinsically irreversible…[but] is possible only because of a special act of God."[85] In the Hebrew Bible, nature (whether demythologized or not) is entirely dependent upon "God's special solicitude, his tender concern for the world."[86]

Although there is no biblical evidence for the cultic use of Genesis 1 during the biblical period, Levenson posits that the heptadic structure of Genesis 1 has its precedents in the fall and spring festivals in Israel,[87] which he suggests may have formed, at least in part, a celebration of the New Year.[88] If so, then the Priestly adaptation of this structure with its culmination in the seventh day may be equivalent to a "downplaying of New Year's Day" and re-assignment of any "cosmogonic significance to the Sabbath." In other words, "[i]t is now the Sabbath and not New Year's Day on which creation is completed, consummated, and mimetically reenacted by the worshipping community, the people of Israel."[89]

Not many have followed Levenson's hypothesis regarding the provenance of the structure of Genesis 1. Nevertheless many believe that Genesis 1 is a liturgical text with its *Sitz im Leben* in the temple cult. This conclusion is driven by the

(van der Toorn, "New Year," 33; cf. Lambert, "Myth," 107). Yet, the function and significance of the epic *must* take into account the context in which it is recited. One could easily refer to a host of examples to validate this point. Ex 15, for example, is recited every day as part of a preliminary morning service in Jewish liturgy, yet takes on more significance in the context of Passover (Sommer, "Akitu Festival," 91 n.49). Likewise, to use a Christian example, biblical passages describing the resurrection of Jesus read on Easter Sunday have a special significance, despite the possibility of those same texts read weekly, or even daily (J. Bidmead, *The Akitu Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia* [Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2002], 68). Interestingly, even in the Kislimu ritual text *Enuma Elish* appears to have been adapted to fit the occasion (Cagirgan and Lambert, "Kislīmu," 91). That the myth *is* related to the ritual does not mean that one, necessarily, gave rise to the other. In this I agree with Sommer: "Other Akitu festivals existed long before Enuma Elish, and there is no reason to suspect that Enuma Elish was composed specifically for the Babylonian Akitu" ("Akitu Festival," 82 n.7). However, it simply cannot be irrelevant that the festival celebrating the beginning of the year and concerned with cosmic, social, and political renewal contains within it the recitation of an epic describing the first day of the world when chaos was defeated, order imposed, and the cycles of nature established.

84 Levenson, *Creation*, 127.
85 Levenson, *Creation*, 12.
86 Levenson, *Creation*, 12.
87 Levenson, *Creation*, 70 – 77.
88 Levenson, *Creation*, 70 – 77; cf. van der Toorn, "New Year," 339 – 343.
89 Levenson, *Creation*, 77.

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recognition of parallels between Genesis 1 and the tabernacle construction narrative in Exodus 25 – 40 and temple building literature in the wider ancient Near East.[90] However, many also note the cultic-liturgical character of the text. Most recently, for example, M. Smith observes that the perceived "unevenness" of the text, which led many older scholars to detect older, written sources lying behind the present form of Genesis 1, is better explained as echoing "the repetition of rituals," which include the "counting of days," "recurring formulas," "repetitions of various actions," and, importantly, the "variations within repetition."[91]

Finally, although there is no biblical text that prescribes a cultic use for Genesis 1, there is some evidence for such a practice in early Judaism. The Mishnah (*Ta'anit* 4:2 – 3) describes the morning reading and afternoon recitation from memory of Genesis 1 during the מעמד sacrifices:

> On the first day they read *In the beginning…*to *Let there be a firmament*; and on the second day, from *Let there be a firmament…*to *Let the waters be gathered together*; and on the third day from *Let the waters be gathered together…*to *Let there be lights*; and on the fourth day, from *Let there be lights…*to *Let the waters bring forth abundantly*; and on the fifth day, from *Let the waters bring forth abundantly…*to *Let the earth bring forth*; and on the sixth day, from *Let the earth bring forth…*to *And the heaven and earth were finished.*[92]

Unfortunately, there is very little information on this practice.[93] Halbertal and Margalit, however, compare it to the ceremony of consecrating the Jewish Sabbath, questioning whether or not either instance should be understood as ceremonies of "revivification" rather than as simple thanksgivings. In their estimation this amounts to a "sacramental reading" of Genesis 1.[94] Such a reading, they argue, would have been thought "to have 'ontological' effects on the divinity and the world" and "the moral purpose of creating a fitting social and cosmic order."[95] Certainly this is a far cry from how one reads Genesis 1 today.[96]

90 See above, n.68.

91 Smith, *Priestly* 127; cf. Weinfeld, "Sabbath," 501 – 11; Vervenne, "Texture," 35 – 79; L. Fisher, "An Ugaritic Ritual and Genesis 1, 1 – 5," *Ugaritica 6* (1969), 197 – 205; cf. H. Liss, "The Imaginary Sanctuary: The Priestly Code as an Example of Fictional Literature in the Hebrew Bible," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (ed. O. Lipschits and M. Oeming; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 673 – 76.

92 H. Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1992), 199.

93 See I. Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993), §34.6.

94 Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*, 104 – 5.

95 Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*, 107.

96 Halbertal and Margalit give as an example of the revivifying effects of linguistic expression the Eucharist: "by means of the sacramental act the presence of Christ is supposed to be created. The bread and wine are not mere representations of Jesus' body and blood; rather,

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However, as Levenson reminds us, creation stories had a purpose in the ancient world that "[t]wo and a half millennia of Western theology" have obscured: "The point of creation is not the production of matter out of nothing, but rather the emergence of a stable community in a benevolent and life-sustaining order."[97]

4.1.3.2 Genesis 1:26–27

The literary genre of Genesis 1 has long provoked debate. If there is a historical consensus, it is that the passage is neither prose nor poetry. Instead, many conclude that it is something in between, a prose text "approaching the level of poetry"[98] with elements of "majestic repose and sustained grandeur"[99] yet, ultimately, lacking from a poetic perspective.[100] Thus, historically, the prosaic pattern of the chapter has received most attention.[101] The unusual nature and unevenness of Genesis 1 was often ascribed to the process of redaction, the imposition of priestly concerns on an earlier, poetic account.[102] However, recent comparisons with biblical liturgies,[103] hymns,[104] and rituals[105] and the concentration on the passage's poetic patterns and vocabulary, including the recurring formulas כי טוב (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31) and ויהי־ערב ויהי־בקר (vv. 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), as well as the counting of days (vv. 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31)[106] which echo ritualistic patterns,[107] have led many to the conclusion that the poetic patterns and

they are supposed to become, through the sacrament, the actual substance of the body and blood of Jesus" (*Idolatry*, 103).

97 Levenson, *Creation*, 12.

98 U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on Genesis* (trans. I. Abrahams; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961–4), 1:11.

99 J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (trans. Black and Menzies; 1885; NY: Meridian, 1957), 297.

100 Gunkel, *Genesis*, 118.

101 "It is hardly fair to judge a prose writer by the requirements of poetry" (J. Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* [ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1930], 11).

102 See, e.g., Skinner's convenient discussion in *Genesis*, 7–12.

103 See, e.g., Weinfeld, "Sabbath," 501–11; Vervenne, "Texture," 35–79.

104 See, e.g., Polak, "Poetic Style," 2–31.

105 See, e.g., Fisher, "Ugaritic Ritual," 197–205; cf. Smith, *Priestly*, 79–81.

106 Other poetic patterns include the lack of the article in the opening clause (בראשית ברא אלהים) and the refrain ויהי־ערב ויהי־בקר, the use of the cardinal number אחד as an ordinal (v. 5), which is matched by Ugaritic ritual texts, and the pervasiveness of terms and patterns otherwise commonly found in Hebrew poetry. For a fuller discussion see, e.g., F. Polak, "Poetic Style and Parallelism in the Creation Account (Genesis 1.1–2.3)," in *Creation in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (ed. H.G. Reventlow and Y. Hoffman; JSOTSup 319; London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 2–31; Fisher, "Ugaritic Ritual," 197–205; Vervenne, "Texture," 35–79.

107 See, e.g., Smith, *Priestly*, 79–81; Fisher, "Ugaritic Ritual," 200; cf. Liss, "Imaginary," 674–76.

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priestly characteristics are, in fact, pervasive enough to account for the literary style of the entire chapter.[108]

The cultic background of the chapter is also signaled by the passage's overall structure. The heptadic structure, long thought to be a Priestly imposition on an earlier account and the cause of various irregularities (e.g., the inconsistency between works and the days of creation[109]), has been shown to be more extensive than originally thought. Groups and multiples of seven are, in fact, woven throughout the passage and not limited to the seven days of creation.[110] As already noted, Levenson compares Genesis 1 to the *akītu* ritual as a Babylonian example of creation over multiple days and, thus, posits that the heptadic structure of Genesis 1 has its precedents in Israelite New Year ritual(s) and that the Priestly adaptation of this structure is the product of a conscious effort to transfer the "cosmogonic significance" of New Year's Day to the Sabbath.[111] Likewise, others observe similar seven-day structures in some Near Eastern temple building/consecration ceremonies.[112] Thus, for example, the two cylinders of Gudea (c. 2200 BCE) that describe the entire process of the founding of Ningirsu's temple at Lagash, also posit a seven-day ceremony consisting of various rituals and prayers.[113]

More significant, however, is J. Walton's observation that the Gudea in-

108 This does not mean, however, that the Priestly creation account does not stand in a long stream of creation traditions found throughout the ancient Near East. On the contrary, to cite one author, "[t]he Priestly author did not stitch together anyone else's documents, but neither did he make up out of whole cloth the world pictured that his composition projects, nor did he work in the absence of traditional lore that served as the raw material for his impressive authorial labors" (Levenson, *Creation*, 68).

109 As many have pointed out, there are eight works of creation, which are distributed over only six days, so that two actions characterize days three and six. Further, the creation of the firmament cuts across days two and three.

110 Cassuto, *Genesis I*, 13 – 15. Thus, for example, the important terms of verse 1, אלהים, שמים, and ארץ occur throughout the chapter in multiples of seven (אלהים, 35x; שמים, 21x; ארץ, 21x). In the description of the first day, the terms אור ("light") and יום ("day") occur seven times (אור, 5x; יום, 2x). The term חיה ("living thing") appears seven times throughout the chapter, as does the expression כי טוב ("that it was good"); the final occurrence being טוב מאד ("very good"). The first verse has seven words and the second, fourteen. In the paragraph describing the seventh day, there occur three sentences, which consist of seven words each and contain the expression יום השביעי ("the seventh day"). Although not all of Cassuto's observations are as convincing as those above, his conclusion that the "numerical symmetry" is "the golden thread that binds together all the parts of the section and serves as a convincing proof of its unity" (Cassuto, *Genesis I,* 15) seems likely. See also A. Toeg, "Genesis 1 and the Sabbath" (Hebrew), *Beth Miqra'* 50 (1972), 291; Levenson, *Creation*, 68.

111 Levenson, *Creation*, 70 – 77.

112 See, e.g., Walton, *Thought*, 197 – 99; Levenson, *Creation*, 78 – 9; Weinfeld, "Sabbath," 504.

113 Gudea Cylinder B xvii 18 – 19. See Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, 33 – 57. Note also that in the Ugaritic Baal Myth, the building of Baal's temple takes seven days. Only then is the banquet prepared and the god enters into his house (CTA 5 vi 16 – 40).

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scription and Genesis 1 share a focus on the installation of functionaries that make the temple/world operational.[114] In particular, the Gudea inscription describes various gods "passing in review" in front of Ningirsu before being "incorporated into the temple as members of the staff" (B 6.23; 7.11, 23; 8.9, 22; 9.4 – 5, 14; 10.2. 8, 15; 11.2, 26; 12.6, 17 – 18, 25). The text continues by describing the gifts of utensils and furniture for the temple (14.13 – 22) and the filling of the land and waters with living inhabitants (fish and animals, 15.5 – 12). Obviously, the central event in all the activities is the entrance of the deity's image into his temple (17.18).

In Genesis 1, this functional focus is likewise found in correspondence between days one through three and days four through six. The correspondence is traditionally diagrammed as follows:

Day 1	Light	Day 4	Luminaries
Day 2	Sky and Sea	Day 5	Birds and Fish
Day 3	Land	Day 6	Animals and Man

According to Walton, days one through three describe the creator assigning function to "light" (="day"), "dark" (= "night"), "firmament" (= "heaven"), "dry land" (= "earth"), and "waters" (= "seas"). In days four through six, therefore, the creator installs functionaries for the "cosmic temple." Thus, the "lights" (sun, moon) function to rule over the day and night, the "fish," "birds," and "beasts" fill their respective abodes (sea, sky, and earth), and humanity rules over them. Walton concludes that, "[j]ust as Gudea's account established functions for the temple and then supplied functionaries that operate in it, the Genesis account set up functions (days 1 – 3) and functionaries (days 4 – 6) for the cosmic temple."[115]

The relationship between temple and creation in the ancient Near East is a well-established principle. Temples in the ancient world were considered a type of the archetypal cosmic temple, a microcosm of the cosmos.[116] What makes Genesis 1 unique, however, is that it presents the creation of the world as a macrocosm of the temple. In other words, Genesis 1 presents creation "as issuing forth in a sort of divine temple"[117] with the various celestial bodies and life forms

114 Walton, *Thought*, 197 – 99

115 Walton, *Thought*, 197. The preoccupation on assigning function/destiny in Genesis 1 is also seen in the correspondence between divine naming in days one through three and blessing in days five, six, and seven (Smith, *Priestly*, 64).

116 Weinfeld, "Sabbath," 507; Kearney, "Creation," 384 and n.22; Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, 335 – 7; C. Meyers, "Temple, Jerusalem," *ABD* 3:359 – 60; O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (trans. T. J. Hallet; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 113 – 5, 171 – 6; Levenson, *Creation,* 79 – 99; *idem*, "The Temple and the World," *JR* 64 (1984), 285 – 7.

117 Smith, *Priestly*, 69.

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playing the part of temple functionaries and culminating in the deity taking up his residency.

Both the literary characteristics and the overall structure of Genesis 1 can be adequately explained by the chapter's cultic and ritualistic concerns. While the genre is difficult to categorize, given the fluidity in which it moves from prosaic to poetic patterns, the pervasive nature of ritual features points toward the conclusion that the passage "comes by way of priestly ritual style and background."[118] Further, the cultic character of the passage is seen most clearly in its overall structure. Genesis 1 describes creation in terms of temple building and consecration. Both Genesis 1 and these building/dedication ceremonies describe the installation of temple appurtenances, priestly personnel, various lower gods, and the entrance of the "image" of the god into the temple, often over multiple days. It is within this cultic and ritual literary environment that we encounter the Hebrew term צלם and the description of humanity as צלם אלהים (Gen. 1:26 – 27).

4.1.3.2.1 בצלמנו כדמותנו (Genesis 1:26) and בדמותו כצלמו (Genesis 5:3)

In Genesis 1:26, God proposes to create humanity: נעשׂה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו.[119] These two prepositional phrases have perhaps garnered more attention than any other passage in the Hebrew Bible. Not only are the meanings and relationship between the two governed nouns, צלם and דמות, in doubt, so also are the meanings of the two prepositions. Regarding the latter, a majority of modern interpreters believe that the two prepositions have a similar (if not synonymous) meaning.[120] Primarily, there are two reasons for this consensus: 1) the seemingly synonymous nature of the two governed nouns, צלם and דמות,[121] and 2) the fact that the prepositional phrases are reversed in Genesis 5:3:

ויחי אדם שׁלשׁים ומאת שׁנה ויולד בדמותו כצלמו ויקרא את־שׁמו שׁת

When Adam was 130 years old, he fathered a son בדמותו כצלמו and he named him Seth.

Here the Priestly author describes the beginnings of the Sethite line with Adam as the head. He (rather than God) functions as the agent to which the object, Seth, is likened. Thus, in 1:26, humanity is likened to God, בצלמנו כדמותנו. In 5:3, however, Seth is likened to Adam בדמותו כצלמו. Confronted by such an unusual change in syntax many, therefore, conclude with von Rad: "There is no partic-

118 Smith, *Priestly*, 127.

119 For an extensive discussion of the use of the plural here, see Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 202 – 12. For complementary usage, see Gen 3:22; 11:7; and Isa 6:8.

120 See, e. g., von Rad, *Genesis*, 58; Humbert, *Études*, 21; T. Mettinger, "Abbild oder Urbild? 'Imago Dei' in traditionsgeschichtlicher Sicht," *ZAW* 86 (1974), 406; Bird, "'Male," 138 n.20; Westermann, *Genesis 1 – 11*, 145; Wildberger, *TLOT* 3.1082.

121 On these terms, see below.

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ular significance in the change of prepositions ('in' our image, 'according to' our likeness). In 5:3 they are exchanged without any difference in meaning."[122]

The synonymous nature of the ב and כ in Genesis 1:26 f and 5:3 has not gone unquestioned, however.[123] Most recently, R. Garr has provided an exhaustive treatment of the supposed synonymity of two prepositions. He argues that the common function of כ is to compare two objects that are semantically and referentially distinct. In other words, כ implies separation in its function of comparison.[124] In contrast, ב retains a sense of proximity. "It expresses location (with-) in a realm, whether spatial or nonspatial[125]…physical or emotional,[126] coextensive, parallel, and even coincident or coterminous."[127] According to Garr, this distinction remains intact in Genesis 1:26 and 5:3.

The synonymous reading of the two prepositions usually depends upon reading the ב in terms more often encountered with כ, i. e. ב *normativum* ("in the manner of"). Thus, G. Wenham cites Exodus 25:40, where Moses is told to make the various appurtenances of the tabernacle "according to the model (בתבניתם) that you are shown on the mountain."[128] This use of ב is then compared to similar uses of כ, i. e. those expressing likeness of standard in production. Thus, for example,

122 von Rad, *Genesis*, 58.

123 E.g., Clines, "Image," 77 – 78; Zenger, *Bogen*, 84 n.109; Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 95 – 116.

124 "It is incorrect," states Garr, "to assert that the preposition כ can express 'identity' or 'exact…equality.' It expresses a similarity or approximation between otherwise *dis*similar and *non*identical entities" (*Image and Likeness*, 98 [italics his]; cf. C. Dohmen, "Die Statue von Tell Fecherīye und die Gottebenbildlichkeit des Mensche:. Ein Beitrag zur Bilderterminologie," *BN* 22 [1983], 100).

125 See, e. g., the preposition's temporal application to "mark an actual time *in*, *at* or *when*. It may also mark an action simultaneous to that of the main verb…by an infinitive in a circumstantial clause" (WOC §11.2.5c).

126 By "physical," Garr means those instances when the preposition introduces the object after verbs of "touching," "striking," or "reaching to" something (Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 107 – 8; cf. WOC §11.2.5 f; *GKC* §119k). By "emotional," Garr means those instances when the preposition introduces the object of "senses of perception" (e. g., "seeing," "smelling") and "trusting" (בחר, Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 104 – 107; cf. WOC §11.2.5 f). *GKC* 119k-n also emphasizes the proximity and participatory aspect of the preposition.

127 According to Garr, these final categories are interrelated: "Each time, the locative preposition places a restriction on its coreferential head; it narrows the scope of the head to a limited sphere" (*Image and Likeness*, 110). Thus, e. g., the ב *normativum* limits activity to a pre-established criterion or measure (e. g., Num 1:2; Ex 26:8; 30:32). The ב *essentiæ* ("as, serving as") limits an entity to particular characteristics (e. g., Ex 6:3; 35:31; Num 18:26). The distributive, or partitive, ב limits the scope of a noun to "particular inherent parts" (e. g., Gen 7:21; Ex 12:19; Num 31:11). This limitative function of ב is inherent in its primary meaning: "Underlying the very various uses of this preposition is either the idea of being or moving within some definite region, or some sphere of space or time" (*GKC* §119 h; cf. Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 110 n.80).

128 Wenham, *Genesis 1 – 11*, 29.

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ומעשׂה האופנים כמעשׂה אופן המרכבה ידותם וגביהם וחשׁקיהם וחשׁריהם הכל מוצק

The construction of the wheels was like the construction of (כמעשׂה) a chariot's wheel, that is, their axles, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs were all cast.
(1 Kgs 7:33)

ויעשׂ את־החשׁן מעשׂה חשׁב כמעשׂה אפד זהב תכלת וארגמן ותולעת שני ושׁשׁ משׁזר

He made the breast piece, skilled work, according to the construction (כמעשׂה) of the ephod; gold, blue, purple, crimson material and fine twisted linen.
(Ex 39:8)

However, in Exodus 25:40, the scope of the antecedent is *limited* to a pre-established criterion[129] and both the antecedent and the governed noun are, therefore, co-referential: "both the head and dependent noun refer to a single entity…the locative prepositional phrase and its head are practically inseparable."[130] In the latter two examples, the likened entities are not co-referential: they compare otherwise referentially distinct items. Although the first example (1 Kgs 7:33a) appears to compare similar items (the antecedent and the governed object are both "wheels"), the comparison is merely approximate.[131] The second example more obviously likens two distinct entities, a breast piece and the ephod.[132]

This basic difference between the two prepositions is also seen, for example, in subordinate temporal clauses formed with a preposition and infinitive construct. Although the temporal infinitive construct prefixed with ב or כ can be translated similarly (i.e. "when"), grammarians agree that the infinitive with ב depicts a situation that is *simultaneous* with that of the finite verb and that the same construction with כ implies greater temporal separation (the action is initiated or completed *prior* to the finite verb).[133]

Applying this to Genesis 1:26 and 5:3[134] leads to the conclusion that the

129 On the basic limitative function of ב, see above n.481.

130 Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 110.

131 In fact, the verse continues by detailing in which ways the former "wheels" are like chariot wheels: "their axels, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs were all cast."

132 Again, the verse continues by detailing how the two are comparable: "of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen."

133 Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 103–4; cf. WOC §36.2.2b: "The [subordinate] construction occurs with every preposition, but most frequently with ב and כ, especially with a temporal sense. With the infinitive construct, ב denotes in general the temporal proximity of one event to another, כ more specifically the more immediately preceding time."

134 Garr also demonstrates that this basic distinction holds in passages resembling Gen 1:26 and 5:3, where two prepositional phrases (the first governed by ב and the second by כ) qualify a single antecedent (e.g., Num 29:18; Judg 20:39; Deut 28:62). In each of these examples, the object governed by ב is co-referential with its antecedent, while the object

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phrases qualify the creation/reproduction of humanity in two distinct, albeit similar, ways. The first is marked with the "locative-proximate" ב, while the second is marked by the "similative-separative" כ. The former characterizes a close relationship between the antecedent and object, the latter, only an approximate one. The change of prepositions with their respective objects in Genesis 1:26 and 5:3 signals a change in the relationship between the antecedent and the object of comparison. The relationship between God and humanity (1:26) is, therefore, (slightly) different from the relationship between Adam and Seth (5:3). Humanity is comparable to God בצלמנו כדמותנו, while Seth is comparable to Adam בדמותו כצלמו. In order to determine the precise differences between these two relationships, however, we must first determine the meanings of the governed nouns, צלם and דמות.

Like the prepositions that govern them, the Hebrew terms צלם and דמות are also semantically similar. In the Hebrew Bible, as well as the wider ancient Near East, both terms (or their cognates) can refer to representations of a physical object. This is especially clear in the Aramaic-Akkadian inscription of Hadduyitî of Guzana (eighth century BCE). In this bilingual inscription, the Akkadian term *ṣalmu* is alternatively translated by the Aramaic terms דמות or צלם. "The likeness (דמותא) of Hadduyitî which he set up before Hadad of Sikan" (l.1) is later described as "the image of Hadduyitî" (צלם הדיסעי, l.12), "this likeness" (דמותא זאת, l.15), and "his image" (צלמה, l.16).[135] In every case, it is clear that the terms refer to the statue of King Hadduyitî.

Both terms can also refer to visible representations of physical objects in the Hebrew Bible, as the following verses make clear:

וישלח המלך אחז אל־אוריה הכהן את־דמות המזבח ואת־תבניתו לכל־מעשׂהו

King Ahaz sent to Uriah, the priest, a likeness (דמות) of the altar, its pattern, regarding all its details.
(2 Kgs 16:10b)

ועשׂיתם צלמי עפליכם וצלמי עכבריכם המשׁחיתם את־הארץ ונתתם לאלהי ישׂראל כבוד

And you will make images (צלמי) of your tumors and images (צלמי) of your mice that are destroying the land and give glory to the God of Israel.
(1 Sam 6:5a)

In contrast to the Aramaic inscription from Tell Fakhariyeh, however, a basic distinction does seem to hold for the Hebrew Bible.[136] The term דמות is con-

governed by כ is not co-referential; it only approximates the antecedent in a certain way (*Image and Likeness*, 112–113).

135 For text and discussion, see above, p. 32 with n.38.

136 See, however, Garr, who argues that the two Aramaic terms in the inscription have different

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sistently used to refer to the form of a representation (i. e. "form," "likeness"), while such an emphasis is often absent from the use of צלם. The specific form that the דמות representation takes can be physical or abstract. This conclusion is clearly seen in Ezekiel's visions in chapters 1, 8, and 10, where the prophet struggles to describe, physically, what he saw. In these chapters, the term דמות is used twelve times (1:5 [2x], 10, 13, 16, 22, 26 [2x], 28; 8:2; 10:1, 10, 21, 22) and is often juxtaposed with the expression כמראה ("like a semblance/appearance," 1:13, 14, 16, 26 [2x], 27 [2x], 28; 8:2 [2x], 4; 10:1).[137] Thus, for example, the heavenly entourage in chapter 1 is described as having the form of four living creatures (דמות ארבע חיות) and, more specifically, they had the semblance of human form (זה מראיהן דמות אדם להנה, 1:5). Later in the same chapter, the vision of the divine כבוד is described as "a form like the semblance of a human" (דמות כמראה אדם, 1:26; cf. 8:2).[138] Moving outside Ezekiel confirms this conclusion. Thus, in 2 Kings 16:10, a form (דמות) of the Damascus altar was sent to Uriah in order for him to make an exact replica of it. Whether the דמות here entails a two- or three-dimensional copy is debated,[139] but that it serves as a blueprint describing the form of the altar is not. Perhaps less exact (but no less to the point) is 2 Chronicles 4:3, where the molten sea is said to stand on the backs of the דמות of oxen ("what looked like oxen"[140]). Indeed, this basic semantic function of the nominal to compare one thing to another is the reason that the term can be found making more abstract comparisons (e. g., Isa 13:4; 40:18) and even as a simple extension of the preposition כ (e. g., Ps 58:5).[141]

The conclusion that דמות refers to the form of the object under comparison may explain the reversal of emphasis in Genesis 5:

> דמות is uniformly associated with human genealogy. It first appears when God proposes the creation of the human race…It next appears when this creative act is recapitulated (5:1), in a summary that also serves to bridge the creation of the human species (אדם)

rhetorical functions based on the context in which they are found: "'Likeness is petitionary and directed at the deity…'Image' is majestic…directed at the people" (Garr, "Image and Likeness," 231 – 32; cf. *idem*, *Image and Likeness*, 121 – 2, 150 – 1).

137 The use of מראה alone, or following a different preposition, is also quite extensive in these chapters, see 1:5, 13, 16 (2x), 27 (2x), 28 (2x); 8:2; 10: 9, 10, 22. Many argue that the use of these two terms reflects Ezekiel's caution in describing God (see, e. g., W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* [trans. R. Clements; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979 – 1983], 1:122; Miller, "'Image,'" 291). Kutsko agrees that Ezekiel's language is cautious, but notes that both terms are used elsewhere to describe "quite concrete objects" (*Between*, 67).

138 Cf. והנה כדמות בני אדם נגע על־שִׂפתי ("And behold, one according to the form of the children of man touched my lips," Dan 10:16a).

139 Cf. J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960), 459 and Preuss, "דְּמָה," *TDOT* 3:257.

140 H. G. H. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 210.

141 Cf. Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 119.

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> and the creation of Adam's individual lineage. Then, דמות appears for a third time on the occasion of Seth's birth (v.3).[142]

In the latter two appearances of דמות, the preposition governing דמות is ב rather than כ (1:26–27). Garr's conclusion that this change in syntax is not meaningless, but indicates a difference in proximity, leads to the conclusion that Genesis 5:1, 3 describe the relationship between God and humanity (5:1) and Adam and Seth (5:3) differently from that described in Genesis 1:26–27. This change is triggered by a change in emphasis: "דמות is included under the heading תולדת or, more specifically, תולדת אדם (Gen 5:1a). At first, God takes the initiative…Next, Adam continues the process and produces a son."[143] The genealogical emphasis in Genesis 5 fits nicely the above conclusions that דמות emphasizes the form, or appearance, of the object of comparison. Thus, "*demut* points to the likeness children have to their parents through birth."[144]

The conclusion that Genesis 5:3 underscores the physical similarity between Adam and Seth has long been felt in Jewish tradition. According to R. David Qimhi,

> After Adam had lived for 130 years he begot children כצלמו [*sic*] בדמותו…for Adam was good and perfect after he repented. The interpretation of בדמותו possibly refers to his bodily likeness, meaning that he resembled him in form, while כצלמו refers to his mind and intellect.[145]

Behind Qimhi's conclusion lies the assumption that after the fall, Adam had previous children who did not resemble him:

> While the first man was under a curse he begot only strange creatures resembling šeddemons and lîl-demons in the ugliness of their faces and backs…But when the Holy One, Blessed be He, was pleased to remove the first man's curse, he bore children who resembled him in comely appearance…[146]

J. Tigay compares these rabbinic assumptions to ancient Greek blessings and curses that also emphasize the form of children. According to Tigay, these ancient Greek texts do not discuss a child becoming a mirror image of one's parents

142 Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 126; cf. Dohmen, "Statue," 100; W. Vogels, "The Human Person in the Image of God (Gn 1, 26)," *ScEs* 46 (1994), 193.

143 Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 126; cf. Clines, "Image," 78 n.117. On humanity taking up the role of agent of creation, see J. Cohen, *"Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It": The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1989), 63–66.

144 Vogels, "Human," 193.

145 As cited and translated by J. Tigay, "'He Begot a Son in His Likeness after His Image,' (Genesis 5:3)," in *Tehilla le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 140–1. For the text of Qimhi, see M. L. Katzenellenbogen (ed.), *Tôrat Hayyîm, Bĕrē'šît, part 1* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1986), 81–82.

146 As cited and translated by Tigay, "'Begot," 140–1.

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"but looking human rather than inhuman."[147] In other words, the issue is whether the child bears any birth defects. Tigay concludes that, "considerable attention in ancient literature (to birth deformities) lend color to the view that Gen 5:3 means that Adam fathered a normal child with human appearance…But [it] also suggests, since birth anomalies were usually considered ominous, that the birth of a normal child to Adam was a sign of blessing…"[148]

For P, therefore, the birth of Seth signals a new beginning and his line a new people to substitute the line of Cain.[149] In this setting, the emphasis lay on the development of Adam's new genealogy through Seth. A line unblemished by the sins of the past, "Seth becomes the *only* viable candidate through whom humanity can develop and thrive."[150] This is seen in Seth's likeness to his father Adam and Adam's likeness to God. According to Clines, "Gen. 5.1, 3 does not speak of the transmission of the divine image (for it belongs to humanity as such, and so cannot be transmitted), but of Seth's likeness to Adam"[151] and, of course, Adam's likeness to God (5:1).[152]

In contrast, צלם is found almost exclusively in cultic contexts to refer to cultic statuary, often saying nothing (at least explicitly) about the form.[153] Outside the

147 Tigay, "'Begot,'" 142. See, e. g., Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon* 3.110 – 11: "If any one should violate this…let them be under the curse…that their wives bear children not like those who begat them, but monsters (τέρατα)" (*The Speeches of Aeschines* [trans. C. D. Adams; Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1968], 393 – 5); cf. P. Siewert, *Der Eid von Plataiai* (Munich: Beck, 1972), 6 – 8, lines 39 – 46. The reverse can also be true so that those children who resemble their fathers are considered a blessing, see, e. g., Hesiod, *Works and Days,* line 235. M. L. West notes that such a resemblance would put to rest the issue of legitimacy and that abnormal births were a typical feature of heaven-sent pestilences, see *Hesiod: Works and Days* (ed. M. L. West; Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 215 – 16.

148 Tigay, "'Begot,'" 142.

149 Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 129. This is made more explicit in P's linking of Noah's line to that of Seth in Gen 5: "For if only Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives survived the great deluge, and if Noah was a Sethite, then it is from Seth and not Cain that all humanity derives" (J. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* [New Haven: Yale University, 1993], 80). On the importance of Noah in the anthropology of P, see, esp., B. Janowski, "Die lebendige Statue Gottes: Zur Anthropologie der priesterlichen Urgeschichte," in *Gott und Mensch im Dialog* (ed. M. Witte; BZAW 345; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 205 ff.

150 Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 131.

151 Clines, "Image," 78 n.117.

152 Garr argues that the "blemish" may be metaphorical: "Of Adam's three male children, then, only Seth is not blemished by [the Yahwist]. Born after the time of Abel's murder and Cain's punishment, Seth is an innocent" (*Image and Likeness*, 131).

153 Ezek 23:14 may prove an exception. There, engravings of male images (אנשי מחקה) are further described as צלמי כשדיים ("images of Chaldeans"). The wider context does not necessarily suggest a functional interpretation for צלם in this verse. That this may prove an unusual use of צלם is demonstrated by the following verse that describes the same engravings as דמות בני בבל ("a picture of Babylonians" [P. Joyce, *Ezekiel* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 162]). Some, therefore, consider v. 15 an explanatory gloss of צלמי כשדיים (e. g., Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 162). Although Ezek 16:17 contains a similar phrase (צלמי זכר), there the reference is obviously to

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six times צלם appears in the Priestly texts, ten of the remaining eleven occurrences describe cultic/votive statuary.[154] Thus, צלם can refer to the cultic statuary in general (Amos 5:26[155]; Ezek 7:20), the divine statue of Baal (2 Kgs 11:18 // 2 Chr 23:17), the substitute figurines of mice and tumors used to remove plague from the community (2 Sam 6:5, 11), and phallic symbols used in fertility cults (Ezek 16:17).

This function of צלם to refer to cultic statuary is also characteristic of the term *ṣalmu*, the Akkadian cognate of צלם.[156] *ṣalmu* commonly has a cultic or royal function. In a cultic setting, a *ṣalmu* often represents a deity and the term can refer to a statue, a priest, or a king as the *ṣlm ili*.[157] Yet, as we have seen, the *ṣalmu* does not represent its object mimetically. Instead, "the distinction between representation and referent may disappear."[158] In the case of statues, this is most clearly seen in the transformative consecration ceremonies, like the *mīs pî* and *pīt pî*. According to one text, before the ritual the *ṣalmu* is an inanimate object:

> This image (*ṣalam*) without its mouth opened cannot smell incense, cannot eat food, nor drink water.
> (STT 200:43 – 44)[159]

After the ritual, however, the *ṣalmu* was clothed, fed, and bathed on a daily basis,[160] and referred to by the name of the deity it represented.[161] In this

cultic statuary/figurines. Further, as many commentators note, the actual form of the images in this verse is in doubt. Do they refer to divine statues in general, to statues of men (like 23:14), or to phalluses? Although it may be argued that צלם in 1 Sam 6:5 refers to the actual form of the עפלים ("tumors") and עכברים ("mice"), the wider context indicates that a functional interpretation is primary. The images function as cultic/votive figurines by which the "plagues" (5:10 – 12) would magically be removed from the land (see, e. g., Schroer, *Bilder*, 115 – 7). In this way they function like the substitute figurines in Mesopotamia.

154 The sole exception to this conclusion is, perhaps, Ezek 23:17 (but see above, n.507). The Aramaic cognate צלם is used another 17 times (Dan 2 – 3) and, but for one exception (צלם אנפוהי "image of his face," 3:19), agrees with this conclusion. Finally, in contrast to Garr, I do not consider the word צלם ("shadow, dark," cf. *HALOT* צלם II) in Ps 39:7 and 73:20 to be related to the more common צלם in Hebrew. Instead, the former root goes back to the proto-semitic *tlm* and is cognate with Ugaritic *ẓlmt*/*glmt*. The latter goes back to the proto-Semitic *ṣlm* "chop off, hew" (*HALOT* צלם I). Cf. Sommer, *Bodies*, 224 – 5 n.69.

155 The text is difficult. It is possible that the term refers to two specific gods, representing the heavenly body, Saturn. See, e. g., F. I. Anderson and D. Freedman, *Amos* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1989), 532 – 7.

156 See also above, chap. 2.

157 See also above, chap. 2. Like the Hebrew term, however, this function does not exhaust the function of *ṣalmu*, which can "refer to any representation, whether in relief, in the round, or painted" (Winter, "Idols," 15 and 36 n.5; cf. Bird, "'Male," 142; Renger, *RLA* 6.307b; Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 137). For the various uses, see *CAD ṣ* 79 – 84b.

158 Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 141.

159 Text and translation in Walker and Dick, "Induction," 99.

160 See above, chap. 2 n.20.

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somewhat complicated ontological belief, the "real" presence of the one represented is "transubstantiated" into the representation with the result that the representation exists as a valid substitute – or rather: "extension" – of the referent.[162] Thus, *ṣalmu* does not mean "statue, relief, or sculpture" – at least not in the way these terms are used today, since they, in modern use, imply a separation between the represented and the representation.[163] "*Ṣalmu*, on the other hand, has the potential of becoming an entity in its own right, a being rather than a copy of a being."[164]

Ṣalmu is also prominent in the practice of making substitute figurines for imitative or sympathetic magic.[165] In these contexts, the blurred distinction between the represented and the *ṣalmu* allows the figurine (*ṣalmu*) "to represent, more or less accurately, either an enemy to whom one wanted to pass on the evil one suffered, or another carrier who could even be the bearer of the evil himself, if needed."[166] The best example of the latter case is the so-called ritual of the substitute king (*šar/ṣalam pûhi/andunâni*), wherein another human was ritually made the substitute of the king; he was given the king's name, his clothes, and his insignia.[167] The *ṣalmu* became a valid representation of the king and any evil was thereby transferred to the former.

Kings were also represented by a *ṣalmu* in cultic settings. Thus, for example, the royal images of Gudea of Lagash (ca. 2100 BCE) and his son, Ur-Ningirsu, were dedicated to particular deities, placed in a temple or shrine, and received regular offerings.[168] These statues were "provided with messages to be communicated to the god through direct discourse."[169] Likewise, the "image" (Akk. *ṣalmu*; Aram. דמות/צלם) of Hadduyitî of Guzana was set up before Hadad-Sikkanu to allow continual communication between the king and the god. Like the *ṣalmu* of a god, the *ṣalmu* of a king is "not just some well crafted art object essentially detached from what it expresses" but "is part of the person of the king."[170] It is the presence of the king extended, or manifested, continually before his god.[171]

This sort of conceptualization, then, clarifies the real fear of having one's

161 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 171.
162 For the use of "transubstantiation" in this context, see above, chap. 2.
163 Winter, "Idols," 36 n.5; Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 121–48; Berlejung, *Theologie*, 64–65; Herring, "'Transubstantiated,'" 481–9.
164 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 124–25.
165 See above, chap. 2 n.44.
166 Bottero, *Mesopotamia*, 142; cf. Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 140–1.
167 See above, pp. 33 ff.
168 Winter, "Idols," 15; cf. W. W. Hallo, "Texts, Statues and the Cult of the Divine King," in *Congress Volume: Jerusalem, 1986* (ed. J. A. Emerton; VTSup 40; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 58.
169 Winter, "Idols," 15; cf. Hallo, "Texts," 58 and n.25.
170 Schüle, "Image of God," 10; cf. Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 146.
171 "The image is [the king's] substance and a real presence…The image repeats, rather than represents, the king" (Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 144).

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image fall into the hands of an enemy. Images of deities and kings were abducted and assaulted on a regular basis. Kings were tried and even punished by means of their images.[172] Thus, precautionary measures were taken to ensure their well-being. The addition of curses against anyone harming the king's image invoked the well-known Near Eastern paradigm of *lex talionis* in which the punishment selected is the one most fitting for the crime.[173] Thus, curses on these images consistently called for the ending of progeny and the sterilization of the attacker, "thereby not only ending his existence but making any survival through his offspring impossible."[174] The image was on par with progeny.[175] To destroy the image of the king was equivalent to the denial of lineage, both meant to immortalize the referent.[176]

Thus, *ṣalmu* has a functional component in the ancient world. As Garr states, the image served "to express its divine or human referent in its particular setting."[177] Yet, as we have seen, the *ṣalmu* went beyond merely expressing its referent. It actually made manifest the presence of its referent; becoming what it represented. It functioned as a valid substitute of the referent when the referent was not physically present. Therefore, the image did not merely symbolize power or dominion; it was actually empowered to accomplish tasks.

The Priestly use of צלם mirrors the complicated nature of *ṣalmu*. In the midst of the cultic and ritual context of Genesis 1, with its emphasis on temple consecration, humanity is introduced as God's image (v. 26):

ויאמר אלהים נעשׂה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו וירדו בדגת הים ובעוף השׁמים ובבהמה
ובכל־הארץ ובכל־הרמשׂ הרמשׂ על־הארץ

> God said, "Let us make humanity בצלמנו כדמותנו and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts, over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

The emphasis in Genesis 1:26 is on the purpose of humanity in the cosmic temple (cf. 1:28). It is to "have dominion" (רדה) over the earth and the other creatures therein.[178] In contrast to Genesis 5:1, 3, with its emphasis on genealogy, Genesis

172 See above, p. 33.
173 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 170.
174 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 170.
175 The language of the ritual is also important here. "Because it is 'born', the 'image' is not a strictly manufactured product. Instead, it is a ritually induced descendent of its referent. In a certain sense, the 'image' is the referent's child" (Garr, *Image and Likeness,* 143; cf. Hehn, "Terminus," 43).
176 *Graven Image*, 182; cf. Garr, *Image and Likeness*, 143.
177 Garr, *Image and Likeness,* 155.
178 For a comprehensive discussion on humanity's responsibility to "rule" in P, see Janowski, "Statue Gottes," 196–213.

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1:26 focuses on the function of humanity. As such, it is not meaningless that צלם is linked with the proximate preposition ב and precedes the more approximate characterization of humanity's form (כדמותנו). Further, this functional context also appears to confirm the conclusion that ב, in vv. 26 – 27, should be translated as ב *essentiæ* ("as, serving as").[179] Thus, Genesis 1:26 is primarily indicating humanity's purpose in the world: it is to serve *as* God's "image." Humanity manifests the presence and power of אלהים in his (physical) absence.[180]

While the functional interpretation is an important part of the definition of צלם אלהים, it is important to remember that, in Mesopotamia, *ṣalmu* only becomes a valid substitute after a transformational process. Not merely through corresponding function can an object be considered a valid substitute or extension. The image must go through a process in which it is encoded with those signifiers that make up the essence, or destiny, of the referent. Although there is nothing as elaborate as the *mīs pî* or substitute king rituals in the Hebrew Bible, Genesis 1:27 may indeed reflect a similar concern.

4.1.3.2.2 The Poetics and Purpose of Genesis 1:27

Despite the lack of consensus on the literary style of Genesis 1 as a whole, most would concede that Genesis 1:27 is poetical:

ויברא אלהים את־האדם בצלמו / בצלם אלהים ברא אתו / זכר ונקבה ברא אתם

> God created humanity as his image / as the image of God he created them / male and female he created them.

The verse contains multiple repetitions, including the threefold recurrence of the verb ברא, "the concatenation of בצלמו and בצלם אלהים"[181] (both of which contain the contiguous link formed by the possessive construction), as well as the rhythmic counterbalancing of the opening ויברא אלהים and closing ברא אתם.[182] Further, as

179 Cf. Clines, "Image," 75 – 80; Janowski, "Statue Gottes," 189. One of the primary arguments against interpreting the ב as *essentiæ* in Genesis 1:26 is that there is no evidence of a כ *essentiæ* in the Hebrew Bible (see, e. g., Miller, "'Image,'" 296; Westermann, *Genesis 1 – 11*, 145). However, once these prepositions are no longer seen as synonymous, this argument loses its validity.

180 As such, humanity is the caretaker of the cosmos/temple-precinct, a role sometimes assumed by lower deities in ancient temple consecration myths and by the priesthood in ancient Israel. Smith, likewise, argues that the verb כבש ("subdue") is primarily a priestly, not a royal, term (*Priestly*, 100 – 102). In this light, compare the stated purpose of Adam in Gen. 2:15, where he is to עבד ("serve") and שמר ("guard") the garden of God. When these two terms occur together elsewhere, they describe the duties of temple personnel (e. g., Num 3:7 – 8; 8:25 – 26; 18:5 – 6; 1 Chron 23:32; Ezek 44:14; Isa 56:6, etc.).

181 Polak, "Poetic Style," 15.

182 Polak, likewise, notes that "[i]n each clauselet the first part contains 6 syllables: ויברא אלהים, בצלם אלהים, זכר ונקבה. The opening clauselet contains 13 syllables (3, 4 – 3), while

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many have noticed, the verse contains a chiastic structure (ברא : אלהים : צלם :: צלם : אלהים : ברא).[183] K. Mathews, for example, calls the verse "an embedded poem consisting of three lines, with lines one and two in chiastic arrangement (inverted repetition)…[t]he inner elements identify the focus of the poetic verse: the divine image."[184]

Elements such as chiasm, parallelism, repetition, rhyme, and word play are also common in Mesopotamian incantations (as well as omen and dream interpretation). They function to create a sense of unity between apparently opposing elements and they rhetorically correspond to the principle of transfer by association, an essential aspect of substitution rituals. Bahrani observes these same characteristics in the *āšipu* incantation *šiptum šipat Marduk / āšipu ṣalam Marduk* (the conjuration is Marduk's conjuration / the conjurer is Marduk's image). She describes the incantation as a "repetitive performative utterance that transubstantiates the conjuration into one that Marduk himself is making in his manifestation as organic *ṣalmu* (body double)."[185]

Even the more common description of the king as the image of god (*ṣalam ili* / DN) is not immune from Bahrani's understanding of the *āšipu* incantation, since it was likely that the *āšipu* priests were the ones responsible for the description of the king as *ṣalam ili* / DN. As Curtis reminds us, these were the same priests who were "involved with the use of magic figurines," "participated in the mouth opening ceremony" and "would have been quite aware of the images (both magic and votive) that functioned as substitutes…[and] familiar with the cult images and the rites by which they were animated with the life of the deity."[186] In this light, Bahrani's observation that the royal and ritual texts correspond in the use of the possessive construction *ṣalam* DN becomes more significant. According to Bahrani, the use of the possessive construction works through extension and "is of the utmost importance in magical incantations."[187] Thus, the possessive construction, like the repetition, rhetorically functions to link otherwise opposing elements with the name of the deity, somehow "transubstantiating" the one into the other, mirroring the intention of the consecration rituals applied to cultic statues.

This performative utterance, therefore, allows both the priest and king access to the power necessary for the completion of the task at hand. The *āšipu* priests derive their authority and power for incantations from the gods themselves, so

the last two clauselets contain 10 each (6 – 4). In terms of word accent, the three clauselets embody the 4 – 4–4 pattern" ("Poetic Style," 15 – 16).

183 See, e. g., A. R. Ceresko, "The A:B::B:A Word Pattern in Hebrew and Northwest Semitic," *UF* 7 (1975), 77; Skinner, *Genesis*, 30; Cassuto, *Genesis 1*, 11, 57.

184 *Genesis 1 – 11:26* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 172.

185 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 136; cf. above, pp. 44 – 7.

186 Curtis, *Man*, 86.

187 Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 135, 142 – 43.

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that they speak their words in the gods' name.[188] The king, likewise, needs divine power since all his missions are, by definition, the god's missions.[189] In the same way, the blessing formula in Genesis 1:28 (cf. v. 26b) is thought to contain the purpose of making humanity as צלם אלהים: It is to produce like progeny (פרו ורבו ומלאו את־הארץ), "subdue" (כבשׁ), and "rule" (רדה) over the cosmic temple.

We must also keep in mind that blessing and cursing formulae in the ancient Near East were not considered impotent, empty speech. Rather, they were ritual performances that transferred power and destiny. Indeed, D. Freedberg understands blessing as an act of consecration, like anointing, "that brings about an intended change in the sacred status of an image."[190] Not every case of "blessing" in the Hebrew Bible carries this nuance of effective speech, however. "To bless" (ברך) can operate in a number of semantic fields and can have the simple characteristics of a prayer, wish, or, even, greeting (see, e. g., Ruth 2:4). In other instances, however, blessings "seemed to carry an effective power…so that it seems to reflect a magical view of reality."[191] Contextual considerations must aid in determining with which use we are dealing. In the context of Genesis 1, where divine speech (and divine רוח) takes such a prominent role and functions as "the animating principle of creation activity,"[192] it is difficult, if not impossible, to regard the divine blessing as something less effective than the other types of utterances in the chapter.

Another important consideration is the status of the one speaking the blessing. According to D. Frankfurter, the efficaciousness of blessing and cursing in the ancient Near East depended upon the "speaker's prior status as one who knows how to utter words of power."[193] Surely no one would deny that a deity would know how to speak words of power. More, however, can be said here. The world-as-temple analogy that pervades Genesis 1 has the effect of casting God in the role of priest offering blessing to creatures (v. 22) and humans (v. 28).[194]

188 Ritter, "Magical-Expert," 321.

189 Speiser, *Genesis*, 66 – 67.

190 Freedberg, *Power,* 83.

191 P. D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 75. Miller also questions whether the distinctions between efficacious and less potent uses of "blessings" would have been so obvious to the ancient Israelites. On the possible distinction between "religion" and "magic" and the importance of context (literary and social) in determining the function and effect of "blessing" in the Hebrew Bible, see J. K. Aitken, *The Semantics of Blessing and Cursing in Ancient Hebrew* (ANES 23; Louvain; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2007), 8 – 22. On the efficacious nature of blessing with God as the subject of the verb ברך, see Aitken, *Semantics*, 112, 116.

192 Clifford, *Creation,* 144.

193 D. Frankfurter, "Curses, Blessings, and Ritual Authority: Egyptian Magic in Comparative Perspective," *JANER* 5 (2006), 158; cf. W. J. Urbrock, "Blessings and Curses," *ABD* 1:760.

194 Smith, *Priestly,* 103; cf. Gunkel, *Genesis,* 119; Westermann, *Genesis 1 – 11,* 140. M. Fishbane recognizes two dominant structures of divine power and creativity in the ancient Near East.

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Mediating the blessing of God, from the sanctuary, to people was a traditional role of priests in ancient Israel (e.g., Gen 14:19; Num 6:22–26; I Sam 2:20, etc.).[195] In this role, the priests were speaking in the place of God and, so, their words were thought efficacious, as if God himself had spoken.[196] In Genesis 1, then, "God not only provides the force of blessing; God also articulates it by pronouncing it as priests do. In this respect, God is in the image and likeness of the priest."[197]

In the cultic and ritual context of Genesis 1, humanity is introduced as a cultic image. Similar images in Mesopotamia did not merely remind onlookers of the god's (or king's) presence and power, they actually manifested them. The line between the real and the representation was (to say the least) blurred. By means of ritual, the image becomes what it represents, "a being in its own right." Yet this "being" is still tied to the represented person by means of signifiers that encode the representation, such as the name Marduk in *āšipu ṣa-lam Marduk* or אלהים in בצלם אלהים ברא אתו. In both the Akkadian material and Genesis 1:26–27, there is correspondence in terminology, structure, and purpose. Both employ similar terminology to describe the representation of deity, both contain deliberately repetitive speech-acts whose purpose is to transform, or create, the representation into one in which the (presence of the) deity resides in order to make the task at hand successful.

4.1.3.3 Genesis 5:3 and 9:6

Genesis 5:3 and 9:6 further confirms the correspondence between the Priestly use of צלם and the Akkadian *ṣalmu*.

ויחי אדם שלשים ומאת שנה ויולד בדמותו כצלמו ויקרא את־שמו שת

When Adam was 130 years old, he fathered a son בדמותו כצלמו and he named him Seth. (Gen 5:3)

One, of course, is "a theology of combat against the forces of chaos." The second, and more pertinent for our discussion, is "a theology of the effective word." According to Fishbane, the latter theology "derived, in part, from the precedent of royal edicts or *the evocative word of magicians and oracles*" (*Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* [Oxford: Oxford University, 2003], 63 [italics mine]).

195 Smith, *Priestly,* 103. Further, Ben Sira 50:20–21 demonstrates this was still considered a priestly function through the Hellenistic period.

196 For the efficaciousness of ritual in the priestly worldview, see R. Hendel, "Prophets, Priests, and the Efficacy of Ritual," in *Pomegranates & Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual Law and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (ed. D. Wright et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 185–198, esp. 191–93.

197 Smith, *Priestly,* 104. Conceptually, then, this is not so different from the *āšipu* incantation, where the priest utters words of power as the "image of Marduk" (*ṣalam Marduk*). One could just as easily say that Marduk takes on the role of the priest in this text.

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שֹׁפֵךְ דַּם הָאָדָם בָּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשָּׁפֵךְ כִּי בְצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם

> Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall his blood be shed, for God made humanity בצלם אלהים.
> (Gen 9:6)

As already noted, the king's image in ancient Mesopotamia did not function like a memorial or propagandistic statue merely reminding observers of the king's power, but instead functioned as an extension of his presence much like a son or "offshoot," directly and physically linked to his body by means of signifiers inscribed into its body. Further, because it participated in the personhood of the king, it required protection from harm. This protection took the form of curses inscribed on the image itself. The Priestly literature attributes a strikingly similar understanding to צלם. Thus, it can serve both as the qualifying noun describing the relationship of humanity to deity (Gen 1:26 – 27) as well as a son to his father (Gen 5:3), somehow equating the relationships.[198] Like the king's image, the image of God is protected by a curse, so that whoever destroys it will likewise be destroyed (Gen 9:6). Thus, the Priestly solution to the violence of humanity is based upon the concept that the presence of God resides in it, not in the consecrated images of wood, stone, and precious metal. Further, just like the Mesopotamian images, this Priestly passage also inscribes a curse of divine retribution, an eye for an eye – whoever destroys God's living images, will be destroyed by God.[199]

Finally, the contrast set up between the images of ancient Mesopotamia and Israel, according to the Priestly literature, may be highlighted by Numbers 33:52, the only other place in the Pentateuch where צלם is used.[200] Here, however, it is

198 The degree of separation implied in the switch of prepositions/objects is impossible to know and might not be all that important (cf. Gross, "Gottebenbildlichkeit," 21; Janowski, "Statue Gottes," 194). It is clear that the syntactical differences likely highlight the functional component of Gen 1:26 – 27 and the genealogical emphasis of Gen 5.

199 This is even more explicit in Milgrom's interpretation. He argues that the chiastic structure of the verse (שֹׁפֵךְ: דם: הָאָדָם:: בָּאָדָם: דָּמוֹ: יִשָּׁפֵךְ) indicates that "both 'ādām words (CC′) refer to the same man, namely, the victim, and the prefixed beth must therefore be the beth pretii, meaning 'in exchange, for'…Because man is created in the divine image it is God's responsibility, not man's, to requite the murder…" (*Leviticus 1 – 16*, 705). Nevertheless, as Garr points out, whether the verse empowers and authorizes a human agent of punishment (e.g., Sarna, *Genesis*, 62) or not, the point of Gen 9:6b is that "any attempt to obliterate humanity constitutes, for P, an attempt to obliterate God" (*Image and Likeness*, 161; cf. J. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* [JPS; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996], 70 – 71).

200 Num 33:52 has proven difficult for source-critics. According to A. G. Auld, "The blend of deuteronomic and priestly terminology characterizes the whole of Num 33:50 – 56: the blend is sufficiently striking for us to assert that it was drafted by someone familiar with both…" (*Joshua, Moses, and the Land* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980], 75). Indeed, many notable scholars have attributed v. 52 to H (J. Wellhausen, A. Kuenen), P (P^G and P^S, H.

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not used to describe the צלם אלהים, but the צלמי מסכתם ("metal covered images"[201]) of the gods of the Promised Land:

והורשתם את־כל־יושבי הארץ מפניכם ואבדתם את כל־משכיתם ואת כל־צלמי
מסכתם תאבדו ואת כל־במתם תשמידו

You shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their figured stones (כל־משכיתם), all their metal-covered images (כל־צלמי מסכתם), and wipe out all their high places.

In contrast to the צלם אלהים, which is protected by the promise of divine retribution, the צלמי מסכתם of foreigners are thrown into a list meant to remind the Israelites of their obligations upon entering the land;[202] they should be completely destroyed. Valid manifestation of divine presence is not found in consecrated wood, stone, or metal. Rather, humankind is the *locus* of divine presence and, as such, it should be highly cherished.

Holzinger), and D (A. McNeile, with the exception of v. 54 [P]). M. Noth argued that 33:50 – 35:34 is dependent on DtrH, but attributed it to a redactor who "undertook the linking of the Pentateuch" with the work of DtrH (*Numbers* [trans. J. D. Martin; OTL; London: SCM, 1968], 10) and J. Sturdy thought the text was the work of the Priestly writer "drawing together older traditions" (*Numbers* [CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1972], 231). At the very least, there is sufficient evidence to argue that the author/redactor of v. 52 was well aware of the earlier uses of צלם: this is the only other place in the Pentateuch where this term is used. Moreover, this is the only use of צלם in the Hebrew Bible where the term is used with מסכה, a place more often reserved for פסל (Deut 27:15; Judg 17 – 18; Isa 30:22; Nah 1:4; Hab 2:18). When in construct, צלם more often takes an absolute that describes its referent (1 Sam 6:5, 11; 2 Kgs 11:18; Ezek 16:17; 23:14; Amos 5:26[?]), not the material from which it was made (the exception is Daniel's צלם דהבא [3:1, 5, 7, etc.]). It would seem that the author/redactor of Num 33:52 wished to draw a distinction between the legitimate images of YHWH, divinely created, and those of the foreigners, which were built and consecrated by their own hands (cf. Ezek 16:17).

201 Faur argues that interpreting מסכה as an image with a wooden core covered with gold or metal plating is incorrect. He proposed that the term derives from סכה "anoint with" or נסך "cultic libation" and, therefore, "refers to the anointing of the statue during the act of consecration…(or) to the libations made during the ritual of consecration" ("Biblical," 12). C. Dohmen disputes Faur's hypothesis, arguing that since מסכה is found in passages that "describe…production materials and methods" ("מַסֵּכָה," *TDOT* 8:431), the term refers to hammering and plating or, more generally, "the manufacture of the precious metal sheeting required for these methods" (432). Nevertheless, given the importance of the material from which an image was constructed, i. e. the gold and/or other precious metals, it seems that whether the term calls to mind the anointing of the image or its construction at the hands of the craftsman, it refers to the movement of an inanimate object to a living god. By spelling this out, the biblical writer is able to make obvious the human origin of the image and parody those who believe such actions are efficacious.

202 J. de Vaulx, *Les Nombres* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1972), 382.

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4.1.4 Conclusion

Although debated in some circles, most would agree that the exile played an important role in the final development of the Priestly material.[203] The Mesopotamian influence, therefore, must be factored into any consideration of the purpose of Genesis 1, generally, and the meaning of צלם, specifically. The many similarities between Genesis 1 and Mesopotamian literature and tradition point toward a cultic and ritual background of the creation account and make a polemical interpretation of צלם אלהים likely. In other words, the Priestly formulation was intended to contradict the Mesopotamian usage of cultic statues as *ṣlm ili.*

That the Priestly use of צלם mirrors the complicated nature of the Akk. *ṣalmu* was further demonstrated by internal considerations: 1) the immediate context of Genesis 1:26 – 27 with its priestly, cultic and ritual background and emphasis on temple consecration; 2) the terminological and structural correspondences between Genesis 1:27 and the *āšipu* performative utterance, which function to link rhetorically otherwise opposing elements with the name of the deity; and 3) the conceptual similarities between the Priestly use of צלם and the Akkadian *ṣalmu* to equate the relationship between referent and image (Gen 1:26 – 27) to that between father and son (Gen 5:3), making necessary curses "inscribed" on the image itself (Gen 9:6).

Thus, the designation of humanity as צלם אלהים implies more than a mere functional correspondence, but also includes the power and presence of אלהים manifested by his צלם. That humanity would be considered an extension or manifestation of divine presence fits well the polemical context of Genesis 1, where there is a "deliberate demotion of gods associated with nature and cosmos" and an elevation of mankind. This is not, first and foremost, royal ideology, wherein humanity is given the title and role of king over the earth. It is more drastic than that: humanity is given the place primarily occupied by the statues of the gods in the ancient Near East and secondarily by kings and other temple officials. Yet even in the latter forms, the concept is not radically changed; whether wood, stone, or human, after consecration the image was thought to extend or manifest the presence of god.

Such a conceptualization would have provided numerous advantages for the Priestly theologians in their attempt to address the questions raised by the exile. Above all, the exile presented the people with the problem of "producing" divine presence apart from the central cult temple. If there is no temple, how can God dwell with his people? Certainly, this question is answered to some extent in P's

203 See, e. g., Blenkinsopp, *Pentateuch*, 25 – 26; F. Crüsemann, *The Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law* (trans. A. W. Mahnke; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 277 – 301; Blum, *Studien*, 219 – 332; Albertz, *History*, 480 – 492.

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כבוד theology. The numinous fire-like phenomenon that often appears surrounded by cloud (e. g., Ex 24:16 – 17; 40:33b – 38; Lev 1:1) and consists of extraordinary brightness is certainly identified with YHWH in many texts (e. g., Ex 24:15 – 16; cf. Ezek 10:20). Most important for an exilic audience, however, was its mobility and accessibility. It was not exclusively associated with a particular place, but remained with his people during their wilderness wanderings.[204] Further, although the כבוד is often attached to the mobile tabernacle, it could be depicted outside and even away from it (e. g., Ex 24:16 – 17). The כבוד does retain certain iconic connotations. It has shape, albeit quite undefined,[205] and is described in ways analogous to the Mesopotamian concept of *melammu* – the light that radiated from the statues of the gods.[206] Thus, the כבוד is best understood as the "prolongation of the numinous value of the cultic statue,"[207] rather than as the substitute for a cultic statue itself. Indeed, the elusive and abstract character of the כבוד makes the ark and tabernacle better options as substitutes for cultic statues in the Sinai narratives.[208] In P, however, humanity can also function in this role. In this way, the Priestly theologians were able to portray God as present apart from any cultic image and temple. God's presence in exile was made analogous to the real presence of a deity in his cult statue. This special rela-

204 The debate surrounding the Priestly כבוד revolves around the permanence of its presence in/on the tabernacle. According to such scholars as von Rad (*OT Theology 1*, 238 f.), Noth (*A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* [trans. B. W. Anderson; Atlanta: Scholars, 1981], 244 – 7), Cross (*CMHE*, 245 f.), and Clements (*God and Temple*, 116 – 118), P was thought to emphasize the temporary quality of YHWH's presence in the tabernacle, so as to release YHWH from human control. In recent years, however, scholars have called this conclusion into question, arguing that in the Priestly conception YHWH's presence was permanently attached to the tabernacle (see, esp., Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 80 – 115) and that much of the confusion is cleared up when it is recognized that P distinguishes between "a normal, constant presence" in the sanctuary and an occasional, "demonstrative appearance" to all the people (Albertz, 483 f.; cf. Blum, *Studien*, 297 – 9). In either case, P emphasizes the availability of YHWH's presence apart from a geographical location. It moves with and is accessible to the people in the wilderness, providing both judgment and guidance (Kutsko, *Between*, 81 – 87).

205 Cf. Sommer, *Bodies*, 71 f. This, then, contrasts with the non-priestly anthropomorphic depictions of YHWH's presence in, e. g., Gen 18:1 – 2, as well as Ezekiel's humanoid description of the כבוד (see below, pp. 201 – 4).

206 See, e. g., Weinfeld, "כָּבוֹד," *TDOT* 7:29 – 31; *CAD* M 2:9 – 12; Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 98; Haran, "Shining," 167 – 68; Sanders, "Old Light," 400 – 06; Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 103 – 6; cf. below, pp. 201 – 4.

207 Bunta, "Cultic Statue," 233.

208 These are the two physical objects with which the כבוד is most often associated. For the depiction of the ark as a cultic image, see above, chap. 3.2.4. Many scholars have also noted that the Priestly tabernacle narrative bears some functional resemblance to the Mesopotamian *mīs pî* ritual, given the painstaking instructions (Ex 25 – 31), the emphasis on the appropriate building material (esp. in comparison with the calf image, see below, chap. 4.2), the role of the divine spirit with the craftsman, as well as the given function to contain the divine presence (Ex 35 – 40).

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tionship with humanity meant that there would be no need of a divine image;[209] God could dwell amongst his creation wherever humans might be.

Secondly, such a theology of divine presence would also fit the broader concern of P, which attempted to offer a "viable theological basis for a constructive collaboration" with the multicultural and multireligious world in which the exilic and post-exilic communities found themselves.[210] This is seen, foremost, in the attempt to relate the universal primeval relationship between אלהים and humanity with the particular historical relationship between YHWH and Israel. First, there is the succession of divine revelations concerning the identity of the deity: "starting with the universal creator (*ʾelōhīm*) through El-Shaddai of the forefathers (Gen. 17.1) to Yahweh of the people of Israel (Ex 6.2 f.)."[211] Similarly, the juxtaposition of the universal covenant with Noah (Gen 9) and the particular covenant with Abraham (Gen 17) is also quite striking. Lastly, the Priestly depiction of the tabernacle's construction and consecration finds parallels with God's creation activities in the primeval history. As we have mentioned, the tabernacle construction narrative is related both conceptually and linguistically to Genesis 1, and it is likely no coincidence that both the recession of flood waters in Genesis 8:13 and the erection of the tabernacle in Exodus 40:17 occur on the same day.[212]

Thus, the Priestly literature explicitly anchors the saving actions of YHWH for Israel in the actions of the universal creator for all humanity. In other words, at the root of the particular relationship between Israel and YHWH was the relationship between אלהים and every human. Further, the divine relationship

209 Some have thus concluded that a conceptualization of humans as the image of God points toward an original YHWH statue in the first temple: "Gen 1:26…can only be understood against the background of an ancient YHWH statue. It is remarkable that after the destruction of the First Temple (which preceded the post-exilic priestly document), man is regarded as the statue of God…Humans were thus created to be the living statues of the deity. The ritual of vivifying the cult statue was transferred to man in Gen 2. There was no further need of a divine image because YHWH dwelt amongst his people, and humans represented YHWH, as a statue would have done so before, in the cult of the First Temple" (Niehr, "In Search," 93 – 4).

210 Albertz, *History*, 493.

211 Albertz, *History*, 490. Likewise, K. Schmid has also argued that the use of אלהים as a proper noun in Gen 1:1 – 2:4a is an example of P identifying the class of god with the one God of Israel. In this way, P subsumes El-Shaddai of the patriarchs, YHWH of Israel, and the gods of the nations under the one name אלהים ("The Quest for 'God:' Monotheistic Arguments in the Priestly Texts of the Hebrew Bible," unpublished paper, given at Princeton University, Feb. 10, 2007).

212 P. Weimar, "Struktur und Komposition der priesterschriftlichen Geschichtsdarstellung," *BN* 23 (1984),111 f.; Levenson, *Creation*, 73 – 5. As Albertz notes, "the creation of the world and the building of the temple were to serve as the foundation pillars; that is why the priestly theologians took some effort to make the two basic data of their history parallel" (*History*, 490).

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with creation was never completely severed, but was re-affirmed after the flood judgment (Gen 9:6). Conceptualizing humanity as God's living images allowed P to set Israel's particular relationship with Yahweh in a universal dimension. This would have provided a means of distinguishing cultural and religious assimilation from necessary interaction: It provided a polemic against the idols of the "pagan" nations and, at the same time, allowed for certain inclusiveness, enabling dialogue and interaction between cultural and religious communities. Israel's identity, therefore, was not completely defined by cultural or religious segregation. It included an inclusive quality that allowed for Israel to participate in the foreign communities "without a permanent bad conscience."[213]

4.2 Exodus 34:29 – 35: Moses as the Image of God

4.2.1 Introduction

To anticipate a certain conclusion of this chapter, namely, that the conceptualization of Moses in Exodus 34:29 – 35 fits well within the Priestly ideology of humanity as the divine image, it is necessary to demonstrate the likelihood that Exodus 32 – 34 was included in a Priestly redaction of the book. Following this, we will briefly look at Exodus 34:29 – 35 as a product of a Priestly redaction, noting the role the passage plays in the larger Priestly compositions that precede and follow it, as well as how the passage emphasizes Priestly concerns within Exodus 32 – 34. A further goal of the following analysis is to justify a reading strategy that focuses primarily on a form of the text that includes a majority of the book of Exodus, yet is not vulnerable to the accusation that diachronic concerns have been neglected. Rather, it will be proposed that much of the book of Exodus exists at the level of a Priestly redaction. In other words, Exodus 32 – 34 was consciously included in the Priestly redaction of the book of Exodus and can, therefore, be read from a Priestly perspective.[214]

213 Albertz, *History*, 493.

214 The reading that I will propose here is not affected by the renewed debate over the nature of the Priestly tradition, since I am primarily concerned only with the final, Priestly redactor. Whether or not one views this redactor as the last one in a sequence (i. e. $P^G > P^S > R^P$) or as only a redaction and supplementation (P), or as Blum has proposed, a "compositional layer" (K^P) that revised an existing, non-priestly narrative corpus makes little difference, so long as it is granted that this (final), Priestly redactor represents, at least, a penultimate stage in the formation of the book of Exodus. For summaries and bibliographies, see above, chap. 1 n.44.

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4.2.1.1 The Priestly Redaction and Literary Arrangement of Exodus

Regarding the "enormous variety of commentaries and companion works to the book of Exodus," M. Vervenne comments that, "W. H. Schmidt's project to write a classical historical-critical oriented commentary on Exodus[215]…will probably be the last of its kind."[216] Prompting Vervenne's prediction is the growing inability of an individual scholar "to grasp the entire range of problems raised by each distinct section of this very complicated piece of writing," as well as the complete lack of consensus on the older basic assumptions of Pentateuchal criticism.[217] This state of affairs, according to Vervenne, has led to the abundance of recent commentaries that avoid many of the literary problems of the text and instead focus on the book of Exodus as a "theologically oriented literary composition."[218] Vervenne understands this type of work to be synchronic as opposed to diachronic. That is, it focuses on the literary picture that the final author/editor has drawn regarding the history of Israel, rather than the literary history (character and date of sources, their interrelationship, and/or their tradition histories) of the text. Several recent works, however, demonstrate that synchronic and diachronic analyses are not mutually exclusive.[219] This is especially the case at the level of the Priestly redaction of, specifically, the book of Exodus.[220] For while there is continued debate about pentateuchal source criti-

215 See *Exodus* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1988).

216 M. Vervenne, "Current Tendencies and Developments in the Study of the Book of Exodus," in *Studies in the Book of Exodus: Redaction-Reception-Interpretation* (ed. M. Vervenne; Leuven: Leuven University, 1996), 22.

217 Vervenne, "Tendencies," 22. Regarding Ex 32–34, J. Durham reflects similar concerns: "Even a cursory reading of Exod 32–34 reveals to the reader a labyrinth of seams and separate paths, a labyrinth explored and reviewed at length and in sometimes mutually contradictory detail by a variety of commentators" (*Exodus* [Waco: Word Books, 1987], 417). Traditionally, source-critics have assigned the majority of Ex 32–34 to J (Yahwist) and E (Elohist) with little agreement as to which of the two is responsible for any one passage (see, esp., J. Hahn's chart plotting the various source assignments of Ex 32 from 1857–1978 [*Das "Goldene Kalb": Die Jahwe-Verehrung bei Stierbildern in der Geschichte Israels* (Frankfurt am Main; Bern: Lang, 1981), 142–3]). On the Deuteronomistic character of Ex 32, see Dohmen, *Bilderverbot*, 66–131; cf. Blum, *Studien*, 73–75.

218 See, e.g., B. Childs, *Exodus: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM, 1974); Durham, *Exodus*; C. Houtman, *Exodus* (3 vols; Kampen: Kok, 1996).

219 See, e.g., R. Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch* (JSOTSup 89; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990); Blum, *Studien*; T. Dozeman, *God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology and Canon in Exodus 19–24* (SBLMS 37; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989).

220 More generally, see Blum, *Studien*. On the book of Exodus, see, e.g., W. Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32–34* (JSOTSup 22; Sheffield: JSOT, 1983); G. Davies, *Israel in Egypt: Reading Exodus 1–2* (JSOTSup 135; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992); W. Johnstone, "Reactivating the Chronicles Analogy in Pentateuchal Studies, with Special Reference to the Sinai Pericope in Exodus," *ZAW* 99 (1987), 16–37; Dozeman, *God*; M. S. Smith, "The Literary Arrangement of the Priestly Redaction of Exodus: A Preliminary

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cism, there is general agreement that the book of Exodus "shows a significant amount of priestly material as well as marked priestly redaction."[221] In what follows, we will defend the theory that the book of Exodus, or at least a substantial amount of the book, can be read from the standpoint of a Priestly redaction.

A number of recent scholars have attempted to describe the literary character of the book of Exodus based primarily on synchronic considerations. For the most part, these arrangements share in the conviction that the book can be divided into two major parts.[222] Smith, for example, suggests that the book can be separated into two major halves based upon geographical considerations and the supernatural power implied by these locations.[223] Thus, in Exodus 1 – 14, the people are in Egypt, "the land of the power of Pharaoh," and, in Exodus 15:22 – 40:38, they are on Sinai, "the realm of YHWH's power." The center of the book, therefore, is Exodus 15:1 – 21, which focuses on the conflict between these two realms and powers: "The conflict in the middle of the book resolves the struggle between these two domains. With Yahweh's victory at the sea, the power of the One of Sinai is made fully manifest."[224] These major synchronic divisions, however, can also be related to a Priestly diachronic framework: Exodus 1:1 – 7, the Priestly prologue,[225] begins the first half of the book; Exodus 15:22a, which has often been recognized as stemming from a Priestly hand,[226] begins the second half of the book; and Exodus 40:36 – 38 ends the book.

There is some evidence that the book of Exodus can be considered a unit in the Priestly redaction.[227] Exodus 1:1 – 7 connects the book with the Genesis patriarchal and Joseph narratives (vv. 1 – 5), but also presents a thematic break by linking the

Investigation," *CBQ* 58 (1996), 25 – 50; *idem,The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus* (JSOT 239; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997).

221 Smith, "Literary," 29; cf. Dozeman, *God*, 87.

222 See, e. g., J. P. Fokkelman, "Exodus," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (ed. R. Alter and F. Kermode; Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1987), 57 – 58; B. Jacob, *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1992), xxxv, 1083 – 87; P. K. McCarter, "Exodus," in *Harper's Bible Commentary* (ed. J. L. Mays et al. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 129; R. E. Friedman, "Torah (Pentateuch)," *ABD* 6:605b; J. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, The Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 127 – 59; Smith, "Literary," 38; Clifford, "Exodus," *NJBC* 44 – 60.

223 Smith, "Literary," 38; cf. Levenson, *Hebrew Bible*, 127 – 59.

224 Smith, "Literary," 37 – 8.

225 Verses 1 – 5, 7 are regularly attributed to the Priestly stratum, while v. 6 is more often assigned to a pre-priestly source (J) or, less often, to a post-priestly origin (see, e. g., K. Schmid, *Erzväter und Exodus: Untersuchungen zur doppelten Begründung der Ursprünge Israels innerhalb der Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments* [Neukirchen, 1999], 69 – 73). Others, however, note the Deuteronomistic character of vv. 6 and 8 (// Judges 2:8a, 10), see, e. g., Blum, *Studien*, 102.

226 Noth, *Exodus*, 127; Cross, *CMHE*, 310; Childs, *Exodus*, 266; Smith, "Literary," 37 n.58.

227 For the following points, see Smith, "Literary," 31 – 5.

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opening verses with the Priestly injunction in Genesis 1:28 (פרו ורבו ומלאו את־הארץ, "be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth"). Thus, Exodus 1:7 reads:

ובני ישׂראל פרו וישׁרצו וירבו ויעצמו במאד מאד ותמלא הארץ אתם

> Now the people of Israel were fruitful and swarmed; they multiplied and were exceedingly mighty, and the land was filled with them.[228]

More difficult is the assertion that Exodus 40 constitutes a break in the Priestly redaction. Yet, if one takes into consideration the larger Exodus-Numbers corpus, such a case can be made from both an internal and external perspective. Internally, V. Hurowitz argues that Exodus 25 – 31 and 35 – 40, both passages considered to be largely of Priestly origin, are to be connected with Leviticus 8 – 9, since Leviticus 8 – 10 is the fulfillment of the command to consecrate priests, i. e., Aaron and his sons, and describes the sanctification of the tabernacle.[229] Leviticus 1 – 7, describing the "cultic regulations" and "priestly income from sacrifices," represents additional material surrounded by the framework of the tabernacle narrative of Exodus 25 – 40 and Leviticus 8 – 10.[230] The result of such a break, or "caesura," according to Smith, is that "the legal material in Exod 40:33a ends a long section pertaining to the tabernacle, and a Priestly narrative, 40:33b – 38, divides the tabernacle material from the sacrificial materials beginning in Leviticus 1."[231] Externally, the parallels between the Priestly creation account in Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a and Exodus 35 – 40 have long been recognized.[232] Thus, just as Exodus 1:1 – 7 connects the beginning of Israel as a people (in Egypt) with the Priestly command "to be fruitful and multiply," so Exodus 39 – 40 connects the creation of Israel's new cultic life with the (renewed) Sinai covenant and divine tabernacle to the creation of the cosmos.

Scholars generally agree that the book of Exodus has a significant amount of Priestly material and that the signs of Priestly redaction are quite extensive. Chapters 1 – 2 are framed by the Priestly prologue (1:1 – 7), which begins with a genealogical list and a transition from the Genesis narrative, and 2:23 – 25, which provides a transition to the following non-priestly call narrative 3:1 – 4:17.[233]

228 Note also the use of שרץ here and in Gen 1:20 – 21.

229 Smith, *Pilgrimage*, 184; Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, 110 – 112; cf. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1 – 16*, 61; Nihan, *Priestly Torah*, 53.

230 Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, 111.

231 Smith likewise notes that Moses' inability to enter the *miškān* in Ex 40:33b – 35 indicates a "new stage in the divine human communication" and that "[t]he entry of the deity into the sanctuary marks the conclusion of a set pattern in temple and palace building" ("Literary," 34; cf. Gorman, *Ideology*, 144; Hurowitz, *I Have Built,* 267 – 68).

232 See above, n.68.

233 On the Priestly character of 2:23 – 25, see, e. g., Noth, *Exodus*, 33; Blum, *Studien*, 239 n.40; Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources*, 36. Some scholars assign Ex 3:1 – 4:17 to a post-priestly

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Exodus 6:2 – 7:7 provides something of a Priestly doublet to the preceding call narrative (3:1 – 4:17).[234] Within the following plague narrative (Ex 7:8 – 13:16), scholars have found an abundance of Priestly material, the extent and purpose of which is, however, debated.[235] Likewise, the scene at the sea (Ex 13:17 – 15:21) comprises much Priestly material[236] and, significantly, the song itself (Ex 15:1 – 18) appears to have been intentionally incorporated into the Priestly agenda. Thus, Childs notes that 15:19 is such a "close parallel to the Priestly source – the last colon has been taken *verbatim* from 14:29" – that it points "to the work of the final Priestly editor."[237] Further, it is also quite possible that 15:1 – 21 functions as the "pivot" between the geographical locations Egypt and Sinai, as it provides the confrontation between the two respective powers (Pharaoh vs. YHWH).[238] Although the Priestly material in Exodus 15:22 – 18:27 is nowhere near as extensive as in the previous two sections,[239] the assignment of 15:22a and 19:1 – 2a to the Priestly hand "delimit this unit for the priestly redaction."[240] The bulk, if

context, e. g., Schmid, *Erzväter*, 197 – 209; Blum, *Studien*, 27 – 28; J. Gertz, *Tradition und Redaktion in der Exoduserzählung: Untersuchungen zur Endredaktion des Pentateuch* (FRLANT 186; Göttingen, 2000), 315 – 18. On the pre-priestly nature of Ex 3:1 – 4:17, however, see, T. Dozeman, "The Commission of Moses and the Book of Genesis," in *A Farewell to the Yahwist?: The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* (ed. T. Dozeman and K. Schmid; SBLSymS 34; Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 117 – 29. See also in this volume, D. Carr, "What is Required to Identify Pre-Priestly Narrative Connections between Genesis and Exodus? Some General Reflections and Specific Cases," 172 – 9.

234 "[T]here is…a striking similarity in the form of the two narratives…which includes commission, objection, divine response, and sign, which would confirm its parallel role" (Childs, *Exodus*, 111). On the function of the Priestly call narrative, see, e. g., Smith, who notes, for instance, the introduction of Aaron into the commission, the theme of knowledge of YHWH, and the transformation of the conflict from Moses vs. Pharaoh to YHWH vs. Pharaoh ("Literary," 40 – 2).

235 On the Priestly redaction of the plague narratives, see Z. Zevit, "The Priestly Redaction and Interpretation of the Plague Narrative in Exodus," *JQR* (1976), 194 – 205. There appears to be a general consensus regarding the Priestly character of 7:8 – 13, 19 – 22; 8:1 – 3, 11 – 15; 9:8 – 12; 11:9 – 10; 12:1 – 20, 28, 40 – 51 (see Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources*, 36 – 40; Noth, *Exodus*, 58, 70, 92; Childs, *Exodus*, 111, 131, 184; Blum, *Studien*, 242 – 56). Blum adds 9:22 – 23, 35; 10:12 – 13a, 21 – 23, 27; Noth adds 9:22, 23aα; 10:12, 13, 20 – 22aα; Childs adds only 9:35b.

236 According to Noth, the Priestly material here comprises 14:1 – 4, 8, 9aβb, 10abβ, 15 – 18, 21aαb, 22 f., 26, 27aα, 28 f. (*Exodus*, 105; cf. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources*, 40 – 1 and 238 – 9). Childs adds 13:20 and 15:19 (*Exodus*, 220, 248; cf. Blum, *Studien*, 230); Vervenne adds 13:20; 14:11 – 12, 31 ("The 'P' Tradition in the Pentateuch: Document and/or Redactor?" in *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies* [ed. C. Brekelmans and J. Lust; BETL 94; Leuven: Peeters, 1990], 85). On the relationship between the Deuteronomistic and Priestly layers in Exodus 14, see also Blum, *Studien*, 256 – 62.

237 Childs, *Exodus*, 248. cf. Blum, *Studien*, 230; Smith, *Pilgrimage*, 203 – 18.

238 Smith, "Literary," 39.

239 There appears to be a general consensus on the Priestly material in these chapters at 15:22a, 27; 16:1 – 35a, and 17:1a (see Noth, *Exodus*, 128, 131, 138; Childs, *Exodus*, 266, 275; Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources*, 41 – 3).

240 Smith, "Literary," 37.

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not all, of chapters 25 – 31 and 35 – 40 can be assigned to P. Within the preceding material, Dozeman assigns much of chapter 19 and a significant amount of chapter 24 to P.[241] Thus, at the beginning, end, and at most major breaks one finds evidence of Priestly redaction. Further, the Priestly shaping of the book can be seen in the placement and function of the Priestly genealogies (e. g., 1:1 – 4; 6:14 – 25), itineraries (e. g., 12:37a; 13:20; 15:22a; 16:1; 17:1a; 19:1 – 2a),[242] and motifs (e. g., the use of לחת העדת in 31:18, 32:15, and 34:29).[243]

On a grander scale, the two calls of Moses (3:1 – 6:1 and 6:2 – 7:7), in the first half of the book, correspond both structurally and thematically to the double covenant scheme (19 – 31 and 32 – 40), in the second.[244] In this light, Exodus 32 – 34 would, therefore, function as the second giving of the law, or covenant renewal, corresponding to the second commission of Moses in Exodus 6:2 – 7:7. These passages share more than parallel placement; both passages find the Israelites in a situation where the covenant is in jeopardy. In Exodus 6:2 – 7:7 the people are enslaved in Egypt and in Exodus 32 – 34 they are guilty of covenant violation.[245] In both passages the conflict appears to revolve around YHWH and a rival (Pharaoh, the calf-image). Both passages emphasize the revelation of the name YHWH to Moses (i. e. Ex 6:2 – 3 and Ex 33:18 – 34:7) and both passages initiate the deliverance of the people by means of the exaltation of Moses (i. e. Ex 7:1 and Ex 34:29 – 35). Further, in Kearney's work on the Priestly redaction of Exodus 25 – 40, he finds that Exodus 25 – 31 and 35 – 40 evince a structure which is patterned on the Priestly creation account of Genesis 1 – 2:4a.[246] For Kearney, the Priestly redactor already had at his disposal the majority of Exodus 32 – 34 and placed its "fall-restoration" theme into an "archetypal pattern" of "[t]emple building consequent upon the divine act of creation" in order to produce a unity of Exodus 25 – 40: creation (25 – 31), fall (32 – 33), and restoration (34 – 40).[247]

241 19:1 – 2a, 5bβ-6a, 11b, 12aβ-13, 15b, 16aα, 18, 20 – 25; 24:1 – 2, 5 – 6, 8 – 11, 15b – 18a (*God*, 90 – 120; cf. Smith, "Literary," 38 n.60). Noth, however, assigns only 19:1 – 2a and 24:15b – 18 to P (*Exodus*, 155, 200; cf. Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources*, 43 – 4).

242 Cross, *CMHE*, 310 – 11. Noth adds 15:27 (*Exodus*, 128) but assigns 12:37a and 13:20 to J (*Exodus*, 128, 98 – 9, 108, respectively).

243 On the Priestly use of עדת, see Cross, *CMHE*, 300.

244 Smith, "Literary," 30, 38.

245 Note also the use of נגף ("to strike with plague") in 32:35 found also in the plague narrative (7:27; 12:23, 27), the use of נצל ("to plunder") in 33:6 found also in 3:22 and 12:35 – 36. On the apparent inversion of the plague and plundering motif, see below.

246 Kearney, "Creation."

247 Kearney, "Creation," 384 – 385.

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4.2.1.2 Exodus 34:29 – 35 and the Priestly Redaction of Exodus 32 – 34

Exodus 34:29 – 35 is generally held to be the largest Priestly section in Exodus 32 – 34,[248] although there are many who see the passage as stemming from a different tradition with minor Priestly additions.[249] Nevertheless, there are good reasons for concluding that the entire passage was reworked or edited by a Priestly redactor. First, Priestly terminology is quite pervasive in the passage.[250] Thus, the expression עדת שני לחת ("two tablets of testimony"), found in 34:29, is also found in the Priestly notice of 31:18.

ויתן אל־משה ככלתו לדבר אתו בהר סיני שני לחת העדת לחת אבן כתבים באצבע אלהים

> When [YHWH] had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, he gave to Moses the two tablets of testimony, stone tablets, written by the finger of God.
> (31:18)

ויהי ברדת משה מהר סיני ושני לחת העדת ביד משה ברדתו מן־ההר

> When Moses came down Mount Sinai with the two tablets of testimony in his hand as he descended the mountain…
> (34:29a)

The importance of this observation has not been lost on interpreters. Friedman, for example, argues that it is key for determining the transitional character of 34:29 – 35:

> The last priestly notice which precedes (34:29 – 35) states that Moses finished speaking with YHWH and took the tablets in his hand. Now Moses descends with the tablets and…reports all the things which YHWH has commanded (34:32, 34). This in turn anticipates the following Priestly composition, in which Moses begins his report of the Tabernacle, ark, etc. instructions with the words, "This is the thing which YHWH has commanded" (35:4).[251]

248 G. Beer, *Exodus* (HAT; Tübingen: Mohr, 1939), 62 – 65; W. Beyerlin, *Origins and History of the Oldest Sinaitic Traditions* (trans. S. Rudman; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 3 – 4, 30; J. Hyatt, *Exodus* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1971), 318, 326; Cross, *CMHE*, 314; W. Propp, *Exodus 19 – 40* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2006), 152 – 54 ("perhaps P"); J. Plastaras, *The God of Exodus: The Theology of the Exodus Narratives* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1966), 317; Gorman, *Ideology*, 141 f.; R. E. Friedman, *The Exile and Biblical Narrative: The Formation of the Deuteronomistic and Priestly Works* (HSM 22; Chico: Scholars, 1981), 99 – 100; Blenkinsopp, "Structure of P," 279 n.16; Dozeman, *God*, 140; Blum, *Studien*, 70.

249 Most notably, Noth states that "[d]espite some elements of P language…the passage as a whole does not give the impression of coming from P. But a place cannot be found for it in J either…It is therefore probable that we have a special tradition comparable with 33:7 – 11" (*Exodus*, 267).

250 Cf. Blum, *Studien*, 70 ff.

251 Friedman, *Exile*, 99 – 100.

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This expression, however, also functions as a literary and structural device within Exodus 32 – 34, since the descent scene of 32:15 – 16[252] also corresponds to the tablet motif in 31:18 and 34:29:

ויפן וירד משׁה מן־ההר ושׁני לחת העדת בידו לחת כתבים משׁני עבריהם מזה ומזה
הם כתבים והלחת מעשׂה אלהים המה והמכתב מכתב אלהים הוא חרות על־הלחת

> Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of testimony in his hands, tablets written on both sides; on the front and back they were written. The tablets were the work of God and the writing, engraved on the tablets, was the writing of God.
> (32:15 – 16)

By placing the tablets in Moses' hands in 31:18, the first descent scene in 32:15 – 16, and the final descent scene in 34:29 – 35, "P has clearly intended to parallel the two descents, one dramatizing the breaking of the covenant and the other leading to restoration."[253] In neither context do the tablets play the central role. This is not to say, however, that the function of the tablets is not a crucial one. Indeed, the tablets appear to function as a litmus test on the ability of the calf and Moses to represent YHWH to the people. Thus, in Exodus 32, the description of the tablets as the "work of God" (מעשׂה אלהים) and "the writing of God" (מכתב אלהים, 32:16) functions within the composite narrative as deliberate contrast to the human-made calf (עשׂה־לנו, v. 1; ויעשׂהו, v. 4; עשׂו להם, v. 8). Likewise, the tablets fall to the background of 34:29 – 35, being "outshone by the miracle of Moses' face."[254]

Priestly terminology is also found in 34:31, where it is said that

וישׁבו אליו אהרן וכל־הנשׂאים בעדה

> Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation (עדה)[255] returned to [Moses].

According to J. Gertz, this expression corresponds to the "Versammlung der Gemeinde der Israeliten"[256] at 35:1, 4 (כל־עדת בני ישׂראל), which Gertz understands to function in contrast to the "people gather[ing] against Aaron" (ויקהל העם על־אהרן),

252 On the Priestly character of these verses, see, e. g., Kearney, "Creation," 382; S. Lehming, "Versuch zu Ex. XXXII," *VT* 10 (1960), 36; Dohmen, *Bilderverbot*, 97, 108; Blum, *Studien*, 231.

253 Kearney, "Creation," 382.

254 M. Hauge, *The Descent from the Mountain: Narrative Patterns in Exodus 19 – 40* (JSOTSup 323; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 165.

255 Moberly asserts that the presence of this term presents the strongest linguistic argument for a Priestly composition or redaction of 34:29 – 35 (*Mountain*, 178). For the exclusively Priestly use of this term, see D. Levy et al., "עֵדָה," *TDOT* 10:468 – 480, esp. 470.

256 J. Gertz, "Beobachtungen zu Komposition und Redaktion in Exodus 32 – 34," in *Gottes Volk am Sinai* (ed. E. Blum and M. Köckert; Gütersloh, 2001), 94.

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in Exodus 32:1, forcing him to make the calf. The adversative construction קהל (ni.) + על, like עדה, is found almost exclusively in Priestly literature (Num 16:3, 19; 17:7; 20:2).[257] It is thought to be a Priestly gloss designed to "neutralize" Aaron's culpability in the making and worship of the calf.[258] Moreover, the complete transformation of Aaron and the people from gross idolators to the faithful participants of 35 – 40 is foreshadowed by their "return to Moses" (וישבו אליו) as he descends with the tablets in 34:29.[259]

Further, as Gorman observes, one of the primary concerns of the Priestly theologians is also found in Exodus 34:29 – 35, YHWH speaking to Moses in the tent.[260] The similarities between the tent of meeting tradition described in Exodus 33:7 – 11 and Exodus 34:33 – 35 has prompted many to argue that both texts witness to a "special tradition."[261] Nevertheless, whatever its origin, the tradition as it now stands in Exodus 34:33 – 35 appears to have been redacted to conform to the Priestly emphasis of the passage. First, in contrast to Exodus 33:7 – 11, there is no mention of any visible manifestation of YHWH. In v. 9, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; such a phenomenon is completely lacking in 34:33 – 35. Correspondingly, the tent fades into the background as well. It is never explicitly mentioned in Exodus 34:29 – 35 – only the description of Moses "going in" to speak "before YHWH" (לפני יהוה)[262] and "coming out" to relate the words of YHWH to the people reminds readers of Moses' entry and exit from the tent. Moreover, there is no emphasis on Moses relating the words of YHWH to the people in Exodus 33:7 – 11. Instead, in its current placement, the tent of meeting scene in Exodus 33:7 – 11 seems only to introduce the following scene of Moses' intercession (33:12 – 23). The point of

257 See, however, the presence of the idiom with an adversative nuance in Jer 26:9.

258 In the reconstruction of vv. 1 – 6, some argue that the entire phrase is an interpolation and should be deleted. Dohmen, however, demonstrates that all that would be strictly necessary is the addition of העם and the change of אל to על. In this way, "[e]ine priesterliche Bearbeitung hat dann durch das zusätzliche העם und die Änderung in על die aktive Rolle des Volkes und die mehr passive des Aaron bei den folgenden Angelegenheiten gleich zu Beginn betonen wollen" ("Right at the outset, a Priestly reworking wanted, then, to stress the active role of the people and the more passive role of Aaron in the following events by the addition of העם and the change to על") (*Bilderverbot*, 101). This is also the likely motivation for the addition of the Priestly expression חג ליהוה in 32:5 (cf. Ex 12:14; 13:6; Lev 23:41; Num 29:12). On the difference between חג יהוה and חג ליהוה, see Dohmen, *Bilderverbot*, 105 – 6.

259 Friedman notes that the goal of transforming Aaron may also be signaled by the "gratuitous references" to him throughout this passage (*Exile*, 99).

260 Gorman, *Ideology*, 144; cf. Mann, who notes that in Ex 34:29 – 35 "we find a very interesting connection between divine presence, Moses' exaltation, and the aspects of talking and seeing" (*Divine Presence*, 148). The root דבר is used seven times in these verses (vv. 29, 31, 32, 33, 34 [2x], 35).

261 E.g., Noth, *Exodus*, 267.

262 לפני יהוה is another expression characteristic of, although not restricted to, the Priestly literature, functioning as a "technical term for the Tabernacle" (Propp, *Exodus 19 – 40*, 618).

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Exodus 34:33 – 35, in contrast, is to emphasize where Moses will now speak to YHWH, that is, in the tent and not on the mountain. This is important to the nature of Exodus 34:29 – 35 as it provides a transition from the mountain to the tabernacle. Thus, vv. 29 – 33 emphasize Moses' meeting with YHWH on the mountain, while vv. 34 – 35 emphasize the new situation of Moses speaking "continually" to YHWH in the tent.[263] This emphasis on spatial categories is found already in another Priestly passage, Exodus 25:21 – 22:

ונתת את־הכפרת על־הארן מלמעלה ואל־הארן תתן את־העדת אשר אתן אליך
ונועדתי לך שם ודברתי אתך מעל הכפרת מבין שני הכרבים אשר על־ארן
העדת את כל־אשר אצוה אותך אל־בני ישראל

You shall put the כפרת on the top of the ark; and in the ark you shall put the testimony (העדת) that I shall give you. There I will meet with you and speak with you, from above the כפרת, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of testimony (העדת), all that I will command you concerning the children of Israel.

This passage describes the purpose of the tabernacle and, according to Gorman, "already recognizes the two-fold nature of Yahweh's address to Moses – on the mountain and in the tent – and, indeed, lays the groundwork for the situation which is explicitly detailed in Exod. 34:29 – 35."[264] Thus, the tent scene of Exodus 34:29 – 35 functions as a transition from the mountain to the tabernacle, Moses goes in before YHWH to receive instructions and exits in order to relay YHWH's commands to the people.[265] Propp is therefore correct that, although in the composite text the "immediate referent" might be the tent of meeting described in Exodus 33:7 – 11, "[i]n the context of P, 34:34 must be prospective: once the Tabernacle is built, this is what Moses will do."[266]

Finally, L. Perlitt argued in 1969 that "[d]ie Anfertigung und Zerstörung des עגל מסכה ist die Mitte der Erzählung, von der alle Nebenzüge ihre Existenz haben."[267] The de-emphasizing of the tablets and the tent in light of the phenomenon of Moses' face is again a case in point. To anticipate a later argument, the selected terminology to describe Moses' "face" as קרן (vv. 29, 30, 35), when interpreted in the context of Exodus 32 – 34, suggests that Moses' face functions

263 Gorman, *Ideology*, 143.

264 Gorman, *Ideology*, 144.

265 Gorman, likewise, notes that there exists an intrinsic connection between 34:29 – 35 and vv. 27 – 28, where YHWH instructs Moses to write down the words for the renewed covenant: "The connection between the 'words' spoken by Yahweh to Moses and related by Moses to the people [in Exodus 34:29 – 35] should not be overlooked" (*Ideology*, 143 n.1).

266 Propp, *Exodus 19 – 40*, 618.

267 "The manufacture and destruction of the עגל מסכה is the center of the narrative from which all the peripheral features have their existence" (*Bundestheologie im Alten Testament* [WMANT 36; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1969], 207; cf. Gertz, "Beobachtungen," 91 – 95).

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as a direct judgment against the calf (a judgment already implicit in the description of the Priestly tablets in 32:15 – 16). Likewise, the emphasis on Moses' "face" corresponds to Moses' request for a theophany in 33:17 – 23, where Moses is informed that he will not be allowed to see YHWH's "face" since "no one can see me and live" (33:20; cf. v. 23). In this way, the fact that the people's only available manifestation of YHWH in Exodus 34:29 – 35 resides on Moses' face cannot be coincidental. Instead it further confirms Moses' elevation over and above the improper calf (already implicit in the lack of emphasis on the Priestly tablets and the tent in 34:29 – 35).

It is therefore legitimate to read Exodus 32 – 34 from the standpoint of the Priestly redaction. From the overall arrangement of the book, as it now stands, it is also possible to reconstruct a Priestly agenda. This literary arrangement includes more than just those sizable portions that are traditionally ascribed to P (Ex 1 – 2; 6 – 7; 25 – 31; 35 – 40). Following Smith, and others, we have argued that the book can be separated into two major halves (Egypt and Sinai), which mirror each other based upon the two-fold call of Moses (3:1 – 14:31) and the two-covenant scheme (19 – 40). The former section is identifiable by the Priestly material from 6:2 through the plague narrative, and the Priestly itinerary notices that structure the narrative from Egypt to Sinai. The latter section is identifiable by the Priestly redaction of chapters 19 – 24, 25 – 31, and 35 – 40, while chapters 32 – 34 are identifiable by the use of the tablet motif (31:18; 32:15 – 16; 34:29).

Moreover, Exodus 32 – 34 has been skillfully brought into the larger Priestly sections (25 – 31; 35 – 40) to complete the set pattern of creation (25 – 31), fall (32 – 33), and restoration (34 – 40). Within Exodus 32 – 34, the Priestly fingerprints are perhaps most evident at Exodus 34:29 – 35 in the use of the Priestly tablet motif, the use of set terminology, and the concern for Aaron. Exodus 34:29 – 35 recognizes the major themes already present in surrounding chapters. The attempt to neutralize Aaron's culpability in the making and worship of the calf in 32:1, 5 corresponds to the contextually gratuitous references to Aaron in 34:30, 31, as well as his treatment in 35 – 40. Again, the tablet motif in 34:29 parallels 32:15 – 16 and provides a structural and literary device emphasizing the first and second descent of Moses (as well as a confirmation of the renewed covenant and a litmus test for the divine representation at hand). Likewise, the focus on the face of Moses corresponds both to the calf tradition (32:1 – 6) as well as the "face" motif introduced in 33:17 – 23, indicating that Moses is both the proper replacement for the calf as well as the manifestation of YHWH to the people. Finally, the tent scene in Exodus 34:29 – 35 corresponds to the tent scene in Exodus 33:7 – 11 and foreshadows the completion of the tabernacle, where Moses will meet continually with YHWH (cf. Ex 25:21 – 22).

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4.2.2 Divine Representation in Exodus 32 – 34

4.2.2.1 Introduction

The key question in Exodus 32 – 34, as it now stands, concerns valid representation of divine presence. According to the narrative, the absence of Moses (32:1) brings about the need for a visible, material representation of the deity. Interestingly, up to this point in the narrative of Exodus, the people have rarely been without some form of visible manifestation of YHWH's presence, whether the pillar of cloud (עמוד ענן) and fire (עמוד אש) that led them through the wilderness to Sinai[268] or Moses himself, who with "god-like powers"[269] led the people from Egypt to their current location.

The underlying importance for a visible manifestation of divine presence is signaled by the motif of "seeing" in this narrative: When the people "see" (ראה) that Moses is delayed, they urge Aaron to make "god(s) who will go before us" (32:1).[270] When Aaron "sees" (ראה) the calf, he builds an altar and proclaims a day of festival and sacrifice (32:5).[271] Both YHWH and Moses' anger against the people is prompted by "seeing" the calf and the people's response to it (vv. 9, 19, 25). Significantly, the next visible manifestation of YHWH for the people does not occur until 33:10, where the people "see" the pillar of cloud at the entrance to the tent of meeting Moses has set up outside of camp (v. 7), prompting them to worship and inviting comparison to the response of 32:4 – 6. Later, Moses' request to "see" YHWH's glory (כבוד, 33:18) results in a piling up of personifying visual and non-visual aspects of presence: YHWH's "goodness" (טוב, v. 19; cf. LXX δόξα) will pass by Moses and YHWH will proclaim his name (שם), but Moses will not "see" YHWH's face (פנים); for no one can "see" YHWH and live (v. 20). Moses is then covered by YHWH's hand (כף) while the glory (כבוד) passes, so that

268 E.g., Ex 13:21; 14:24. Other than the brief mention of the עמוד הענן, in 33:9, there is no mention of this phenomenon from the time they reach the mountain until 40:38. There, however, it is connected specifically with the tabernacle (cf. 33:9). The fire and cloud imagery may have been transferred to the mountaintop theophany (e. g., Ex 19:18; 24:15 – 18).

269 Note, in particular, that the expression "brought us up from the land of Egypt" applied to Moses in Ex 3:12 and 32:1 (cf. Deut 9:21), is an expression otherwise reserved for YHWH (Ex 12:17, 51; 20:2; etc.).

270 According to Hauge, the people's "seeing the absence of Moses" corresponds to Ex 24:17 – 18, where they witness "the appearance of the glory of YHWH" on the top of the mountain and Moses' ascent into the cloud (*Descent*, 65 – 6).

271 There is, in these verses, another link to Ex 24, where, in vv. 4 – 11, the altar and sacrifices are connected to a blood-rite and meal. The blood-rite, in Ex 32, is found in the vv. 25 – 29, where the Levites' slaughter of their kin is presented as a sacrificial act (v. 29). Both sacrificial scenes are then followed by an ascent of Moses. In Ex 24, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders ascend the mountain and, significantly, "see" God (vv. 9 – 11). In Ex 32, Moses ascends alone (vv. 30 ff.). Cf. Hauge, *Descent*, 68.

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he "sees" only YHWH's "back" (אחור, v. 23). Finally, when the people "see" Moses' "face" in 34:29 – 31, they fear to approach him. The people's reaction to Moses' face corresponds to the people's reaction to the theophany of YHWH in Exodus 20:18 – 19, where they "saw the thunder and lightning…the mountain smoking" and "were afraid," "stood at a distance" and pleaded for Moses to act as mediator.[272] Interestingly, reading through Exodus 32 – 34 demonstrates that the divine rejection of the calf was not a blanket rejection of material representation but a specific rejection of the calf in favor of Moses in 34:29 – 35.[273]

4.2.2.2 The Calf as Image of God

The depiction of the calf's creation, consecration, and destruction all point to the interpretation of the calf as a cultic image, believed to substitute, extend, or 'make present' the represented deity in ancient Near Eastern thought. Due to the brevity of the description and certain perceived incongruities in the text, the depiction of Aaron's manufacturing of the calf has presented interpreters with difficulties. Traditionally, three options regarding the calf's construction have been put forward: 1) Aaron formed (צור) the calf in a casting mold; 2) Aaron fashioned (צור) the calf with an engraving stylus or, similarly, Aaron forged (צור) the gold as an engraved image; and 3) Aaron bound (צרר) the gold in a bag or cloak.

In the description of the calf's creation, Aaron takes the "rings of gold" (נזמי הזהב, v 3)[274] from the people: ויצר אתו בחרט ויעשׂהו עגל מסכה. The primary question in this brief description concerns the proper interpretation of חרט. The interpretation that has found the most adherents is, oddly enough, the least plausible. L. Perdue, for example, interprets חרט as a "casting mold." Thus, Aaron formed (צור) the calf in a "casting mold." The biggest obstacle to this interpretation is that חרט has this meaning nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. Further, the verb צור is surely an odd choice for the process of pouring molten metal. As others have also noticed, one might have expected the more typical יצק (Ex 25:12; 37:13; 38:27). The only advantage of this interpretation is that it appears to correspond to the traditional understanding of עגל מסכה as "molten calf." As previously mentioned,[275] however, the interpretation of מסכה as referring to the casting process has recently been

272 Cf. Childs, *Book*, 617 – 8; Durham, *Exodus*, 467.

273 In fact, the larger narrative of Ex 19 – 40 demonstrates that YHWH and the people have arrived at a similar conclusion: the people need a visible manifestation of YHWH. During the long absence of Moses (ארבעים יום וארבעים לילה, 24:18), both the people and YHWH begin devising a way in which YHWH's presence can be made tangible among his people. For the people it is the עגל מסכה (32:4), for YHWH it is the מקדשׁ that dwells in their midst (25:8).

274 This is the most likely referent of אתו in v. 4.

275 For the following points, see above, n.201.

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questioned, since the underlying verb נסך never means "to pour metal" in the Hebrew Bible. Rather, the term more likely refers to the method of hammering and plating or, more generally, the manufacture of the precious metal sheeting required for these methods. Alternatively, the term may derive from either סכה "anoint with" or נסך "cultic libation" and, therefore, "refers to the anointing of the statue during the act of consecration…(or) to the libations made during the ritual of consecration."[276] In either case, the text appears to refer to the movement of an inanimate object to a living god, by means of consecration or by reference to the precious material from which it was constructed.[277]

The LXX translates ויצר אתו בחרט with ἔπλασεν αυ'τὸ ἐν τῇ γραφίδι ("he formed them with a stylus"). This translation corresponds to the only other use of חרט (vocalized חֶרֶט) in the Hebrew Bible. In Isaiah 8:1, the prophet appears to use a חרט אנוש in order to write (כתב) upon a tablet (גליון גדול).[278] The idea that Aaron actually writes on the calf is, however, often rejected since it inverts the logical sequence of the action. One does not typically write or draw on an image before it has been "made."[279] However, given the contrast drawn in this narrative between the human made calf (32:1, 4, 8, 23, 31) and the divinely inscribed tablets (31:18; 32:16), it is possible that the term was chosen specifically for this nuance. Thus, Dohmen's solution to the problem is to interpret the ב as *essentiæ* ("as, serving as") and חרט as a noun referring to the engraving process: "[D]ann arbeitete/schmiedete er es (das Gold) aus als Ziseliertes (Skulptur/plastisches Gebilde)."[280] As we have seen, for Dohmen, מסכה refers to the addition of precious metals, so

276 Faur, "Biblical," 12.

277 The selection of gold and other precious metals/stones was an important part of the image making process. Mesopotamian inscriptions indicate that these materials were thought to be inherently divine, signaled by their "radiance" (*melammu*). In other words, "the property making the stones divine does not occur naturally, inherent in the stones, but itself is of divine origin" (Hurowitz, "What Goes in," 9–10). Dohmen, likewise, notes that, "[c]onsidering the magical and mythical notions associated with gold, which in the ancient Near East were especially widespread in connection with idols, it is easy to see why this particular aspect of the image was specifically singled out or subject to polemic" ("מַסֵּכָה," 436). The biblical authors also recognize the requisite careful selection of suitable materials used in the production of cult statues (e.g., Isa 40:20; Ezek 7:20; 16:17).

278 The adj. אנוש here probably defines the חרט as an "ordinary" or "everyday" tool.

279 The appropriateness of applying the Kantian distinction between the form and decoration of an object to ancient Mesopotamian statues and reliefs is questioned by a number of recent scholars (e.g., Bahrani, *Graven Image*, 107, 149–84; cf. Buccellati, "Tablet," 58–71). According to these scholars, the inscriptions on these objects were seen as an integral part of the object and should be read and interpreted as part of the object. In this light, the עגל מסכה might have been considered incomplete before the inscribing process. On the importance of the verbal elements in ancient Mesopotamian incantation and substitution rituals, as well as the importance of the curses inscribed on royal images for interpreting the function of those images, see above, chap. 2 and 4.1.3.

280 "He made/forged it (the gold) as an engraved (sculpture/three dimensional object)" (Dohmen, *Bilderverbot*, 73).

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that the following clause (ויעשׂהו עגל מסכה) emphasizes that process: "[E]r machte es zum edelmetallenen Kalb."[281]

The interpretation that Aaron bound the gold in a bag or cloak reads the verb ויצר as deriving from צרר ("to bind") and emends חָרֶט to חָרָט (חריט).[282] Important for this interpretation is the use of the term in 2 Kings 5:23, where it is said of Naaman, "he bound two silver talents in two bags/cloaks" (ויצר ככרים כסף בשׁני חרטים).[283] Conceptually, the binding of objects in clothing is found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (e. g., Ex 12:34; Ezek 5:3; Prov 30:4) and, more significantly, one can find precious metals being stored in clothing specifically in order to manufacture a divine image (Judg 8:24 – 27; Isa 46:6).[284] The primary advantage of this interpretation is that it harmonizes Aaron's own account of the process in v. 24: "I threw it into the fire, and this calf came out" (ואשׁלכהו באשׁ ויצא העגל הזה). The common assumption regarding this verse is that Aaron is clearly attempting to shift blame. However, as Loewenstamm long ago pointed out, nowhere does the text support the allegation that Aaron is lying:

> …neither the author nor Moses stigmatizes Aaron's statement as a lie. On the contrary, the context proves that the author believed in Aaron's words. Aaron is nowhere represented as a liar, and even a liar will never tell things which his contemporaries would regard as impossible, thus undermining his credibility.[285]

As we have seen, Aaron's viewpoint here is completely in line with the common conceptualization regarding the divine origin of cultic images. Aaron's words are, in fact, comparable to the ritual amputation of the workers' hands in the *mīs pî*. After the officiating priest pretends to cut off the hands of the workmen with a tamarisk sword, they swear out loud, "I did not make him (the statue)…" (BM 45749 line 52).[286] The text actually hints that a consecration ritual may have oc-

281 Dohmen, *Bilderverbot*, 73. Dohmen notes a similar expression in Ex 30:25: ועשׂית אתו שׁמן משׁחת־קדשׁ ("You shall make it into a holy anointing oil"). For more examples, see *GKC* §117ii.

282 Notably, S. Gevirtz claims that such an emendation is unnecessary for this interpretation, since, e. g., the Hebrew פסילים ("idols") is already understood as the functional plural of the segholate noun פסל ("חֶרֶט in the Manufacture of the Golden Calf," *Bib* 65 [1984], 377 – 78). For a discussion regarding the relationship between, specifically, פסילים and פסל, see C. Dohmen, "פסל – פסיל: Zwei Nominalbildungen von פסל?," *BN* 16 (1981), 11 – 12.

283 The term also appears in Isa 3:22 in the context of a collection of garments. It may, therefore, be more correctly understood as "cloak," "coat," etc., rather than "bag" (cf. Schroer, *Bilder*, 87).

284 Schroer, *Bilder*, 87.

285 S. Loewenstamm, "The Making and Destruction of the Golden Calf – A Rejoinder," *Bib* 56:3 (1975), 337.

286 Text and Translation in Walker and Dick, "Induction," 80, 81. In this context, Loewenstamm compares the divine origin of Baal's palace (CTA 4 vi 16 – 40) and the tabernacle in Midrashic literature: "…the Holy Spirit rested upon (Moses) and he erected the Tabernacle.

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curred. The presentation formula, "these are your gods, Israel…" (אלה אלהיך ישׂראל, v. 4), as well as the proclaimed feasts and sacrifices (vv. 5 – 6) may well have been part of a consecration ritual (or at least an indication that one has already occurred), wherein the obvious human craftsmanship would recede behind the divine creation of the image.[287] Additionally, as Faur contends, the term מסכה itself may refer to the anointing of a statue during the act of consecration, so that the very appellative עגל מסכה would indicate that the calf was consecrated.

Nevertheless, the present form of the narrative suggests that this image cannot boast of divine origin. In vv. 1, 4 and 8, the calf is explicitly tied to human craftsmanship (עשׂה־לנו, v. 1; ויעשׂהו, v. 4; עשׂו להם, v. 8). That this is deliberate is made even more apparent in v. 16, where the construction of the calf is contrasted with the tablets that are "the work of God" (מעשׂה אלהים, v. 16; cf. 31:18). As we have seen, such ploys are characteristic of the Deuteronomistic and prophetic parodies that challenge and mock the very idea that a product of human hands can be considered divine. Further, just as the prophetic parodies portray the selection of carefully chosen and valuable material as ultimately useless, Exodus 32 – 34, in the light of 35 – 40, may also portray the calf as deriving from profane material.[288] Thus, Aaron's instructions that the people should "tear away (פרק) rings of gold" from the ears of "your wives, your sons, and your daughters" (32:2; cf. vv. 3, 24) in order to provide the material for the calf may imply a note of violence (comp. Ps 7:3; Zech 11:16; cf. Ezek 19:12).[289] These self-determined (and perhaps forced) offerings of the people in Exodus 32 stand in stark contrast to the voluntary offerings (תרומה), presented from a "generous heart" (נדיב לבו, 35:5; cf. v. 22), for the tabernacle in 35:4 – 36:7.[290] Moreover, as Hurowitz notes, the proper refinement and dedication of the material for the tabernacle may be indicated by the fact that it was a ritual offering (תנופה, 35:22; cf. 38:24) and that the silver used was "derived from the half-sheqel weight silver poll tax" (38:24 – 26).[291] Thus, both episodes describe the production of a material object designed to manifest the presence of deity. The material presented and constructed by the people's own determination is portrayed as flawed and profane in comparison to

You must not say that it was Moses who erected it, for miracles were performed with it and it rose of its own accord for it is stated that, 'the Tabernacle was reared up'" (*Ex Rab* 40:17).

287 Faur notes that the *waw* plays a crucial role in v. 4, by "emphasizing the intimate connection between making the idol and pronouncing the formula to effect the ritual of consecration" ("Biblical," 11; cf. Schmidt, "Aniconic," 90). Against this view, see, e. g., Berlejung, *Theologie*, 355 n.1759.

288 Hurowitz, "What Goes in," 18 – 21.

289 Hurowitz, "What Goes in," 19; cf. Hauge, *Descent*, 77; Moberly, *Mountain*, 61; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 428.

290 Hurowitz, "What Goes in," 19 – 20; cf. Moberly, *Mountain*, 47, 60 – 61.

291 Hurowitz, "What Goes in," 20.

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the material presented and constructed by Moses (e. g., 40:18) at the command of YHWH (e. g., Ex 35:4; 39:42 – 3; 40:16).[292]

Juxtaposing the creation of the calf with Exodus 33:4 – 11 leads to a similar conclusion. Ironically, the people's efforts to secure divine presence actually results in the denial of that presence (33:1 – 3), which, in turn, leads to the people again removing their jewelry, this time in repentance (33:4 – 6). This "self-plundering" (נצל)[293] is immediately followed by the tent of meeting episode (33:7 – 11), where Moses alone sets up the tent "outside of camp" and he alone meets with YHWH, leaving the people as bystanders. The contrast is quite stark: In Exodus 32:1 – 6, the people offer the material, proclaim the identity of the calf, and participate in the festivals and sacrifices. In Exodus 33:4 – 11, the people's jewelry and participation are unnecessary for the manifestation of divine presence.

Moses' own reaction to the presence of the calf bolsters the interpretation that the calf was perceived as a divine image. Exodus 32:20 describes the calf's destruction by the hand of Moses:

ויקח את־העגל אשר עשׂו וישׂרף באשׁ ויטחן עד אשר־דק ויזר
על־פני המים וישׁק את־בני ישׂראל

> He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it upon the waters and made the people of Israel drink it.

This verse has posed multiple problems for exegetes. In order to harmonize the reported material nature of the calf (vv. 3 – 4, 31) many have suggested that the calf was made of wood and then overlaid with gold, or that the calf stood on a wooden pedestal, since gold does not burn, but melts. In this way, the description of the calf's destruction refers to its wooden interior, or pedestal, while the description of the calf's creation refers to its golden exterior. This type of approach was typical, according to C. T. Begg, of the pre-1960's attempt to explain the discontinuity between v. 4 and v. 20, which were "treated virtually without reference to the large (and ever-expanding) body of extra-Biblical ANE documentation concerned with the destruction/elimination of undesirable entities of all sorts" as well as "with the full range of accounts elsewhere in the OT itself."[294] Loewenstamm appears to have been one of the first to change this trend. He compared the destruction of the calf in Exodus 32:20 to the Ugaritic Baal cycle, specifically the destruction of Mot at the hands of Anat. In two

292 Hauge, *Descent*, 136.

293 Hauge, *Descent*, 77 – 8; cf. Moberly, *Mountain*, 61; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 428.

294 C. T. Begg, "The Destruction of the Calf (Exod 32,20/Deut 9,21)," in *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft* (ed. N. Lohfink; BETL 68; Leuven: Leuven University, 1985), 209 – 10; cf. Hahn's survey of scholarship on Ex 32:20 (*Goldene,* 208 – 12).

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separate passages, Anat is said to "burn" (*šrp*), "grind" (*ṭḥn*), and "scatter" (*drʿ*) Mot (CTA 6 ii 4 – 37; CTA 6 v 7 ff.). These parallels prompted Loewenstamm to conclude that the destruction of the calf "constitutes an Israelite development of an early literary pattern that was employed in Canaan to describe the total annihilation of a detested enemy."[295] As we have seen, these actions correspond to the destruction of other cult images in the Hebrew Bible. In detailing the people's responsibility toward the cultic appurtenances, including divine images, of the Canaanites, Deuteronomy 7:5 and 12:3, for example, command their "breaking" (שׁבר pi.), "tearing down" (נתץ), "burning" (שׂרף), "hewing" (גדע pi.), and "destroying" (אבד pi.). Likewise, in Josiah's reform movement against cultic images (2 Kgs 23:4, 6, 12, 14 – 15), he orders the "burning" (שׂרף), "carrying (away) their ashes" (ונשׂא את־עפרם), "beating into dust" (וידק לעפר) and "casting the dust upon graves" (וישׁלך את־עפרה על־קבר). Such rhetoric corresponds to the numerous ancient Near Eastern examples of mutilation and destruction of divine images.[296] Although the most common practice in dealing with reprobate divine images was to capture them, it seems that not all the gods received such gentle treatment, as a relief from Khorsabad depicts Assyrian soldiers smashing a god in the Muzazir temple with axes.[297] Inscriptions sometimes describe such a fate for divine images. Thus, an inscription of Sargon II states, "[t]he temple of Haldia, his god, I set on fire like brush and destroyed his shrine."[298] Likewise, in Aššurbanipal's campaign against Elam, we read that, "I (Aššurbanipal) struck down the people living therein. I smashed their gods…"[299] And, again in the same campaign, "[t]he sanctuaries of Elam I totally destroyed (*lit.*, to nonexistence). Its gods (and) goddesses I scattered (*lit.*, counted) to the wind(s)."[300]

There appears, then, to be evidence that the heaping up of destructive activity (imaginary or real), especially the burning, grinding, and scattering of the dust, "were actions commonly employed in the ancient world to get rid of an idol permanently so that it could never be reconstituted from its scavenged elements

295 S. Loewenstamm, "The Making and Destruction of the Golden Calf," *Bib* 48: 4 (1967), 485.

296 For an exhaustive survey of the comparative material paralleling Ex 32:20, see Begg, "Destruction," 211 – 29.

297 H. Tadmor, "The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study," *JCS* 12 (1959), 86 n.269; Cogan, *Imperialism*, 24; Hahn, *Goldene*, 211; Begg, "Destruction," 224; Keel, *Symbolism*, 233 §317.

298 Translation in *ARAB* 2:91; cf. Cogan, *Imperialism*, 24. There is ample evidence for the destruction of temples, which might certainly imply the concomitant destruction of any statues within (see, especially, S. Holloway, "The Case for Assyrian Religious Influence in Israel and Judah," [Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 1992], 54, table 5, 317 f.).

299 *Rassam Cylinder* 5 118 – 119. Text in M. Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige* (3 vols.; VAB 7; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1916), 2:50; translation in *ARAB* 2:308 §808.

300 *Rassam Cylinder* 6 62 – 64; Text in Streck, *Assurbanipal*, 2:54; translation in *ARAB* 2:310 §810.

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and be thought worthy of worship."[301] Thus, Moses' actions, his immediate and total annihilation of the image, are completely in keeping with Aaron's own description of his involvement as well as the ancient Near Eastern treatment of divine images.

In the creation, worship, and destruction of the calf, the tension exists as to whether the calf was considered as being genuinely divine. As we have seen, the actions of the people, Aaron, and even Moses demonstrate that the calf is considered a divine image. The people demand Aaron make them a god, specifically, one who does the same things for them that YHWH had heretofore done. Moreover, upon seeing the calf, the people proclaim that this calf is the one who had brought them out of Egypt and, after the dedication, the people celebrate, worship, and sacrifice to the calf. Further, there is no reason to accuse Aaron of lying about the creation of the calf in v. 24, since, after consecration, the divine image would have been thought sufficiently disconnected from human origin. Moses, too, deals with the calf in a manner that demonstrates his understanding of the image. He ritually annihilates it so that it could never be reconstituted from the same material.[302] Nevertheless, in detailing the human origin in the calf's production as well as juxtaposing these details with the tent of meeting, the tabernacle, and the divinely created tablets, the narrative implies, in much the same way as the prophets, the foolishness of believing that such human invention could be god.

4.2.2.3 The Calf as Image of YHWH

There have been many suggestions concerning the identity and function of the calf in Exodus 32. The suggestions turn on the exegetes' answers to a number of questions. Does the calf represent one god or are multiple deities in view here? Who, then, is/are this/these god(s)? And, finally, how does the calf represent the god(s) in question?

The suggestion that the image represented "a plurality of gods" is often based on the use of the term אלהים with a plural verb (vv. 1, 4, 8, 23). Yet, the term undoubtedly refers to a singular god in contexts where the referent is obviously a

301 D. Stuart, *Exodus* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 678. On the restoration and repair of divine images in Mesopotamia, see Kutsko, *Between*, 112 – 23, 157 – 69. It is probable that Moses' final action in this verse, i. e. making the people "drink" the scattered remains of the calf, functions as a further elimination rite, rather than as an ordeal procedure analogous to Num 5:11 – 31. See, however, Begg, who concludes that there may exist a basic connection between the two passages in the notion of imposed water drinking as an agent of divine punishment ("Destruction," 229 – 31).

302 Interestingly, even YHWH's anger has been thought to indicate the reality of the image: "If there is not reality in [the calf], why art Thou wroth?" (*Num Rab* 2.15).

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single deity, despite the presence of a plural verb (e. g., Gen 20:13; 2 Sam 7:23).[303] More difficult, however, is the plural demonstrative in the presentation formula in vv. 4, 8:

אלה אלהיך ישׂראל אשׁר העלוך מארץ מצרים

These are your god(s), O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.

The difficulty subsides somewhat once it is realized that this presentation formula is found in almost the same form in two other passages of the Hebrew Bible.

הנה אלהיך ישׂראל אשׁר העלוך מארץ מצרים

Behold your god(s), O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.
(1 Kgs 12:28)

זה אלהיך אשׁר העלך ממצרים

This is your god(s), who brought you up from Egypt.
(Neh 9:18)

It would appear, therefore, that this formula was "firmly connected with the bull image"[304] and, although אלה makes it difficult not to read אלהים as plural, the pronoun makes more sense referring to Jeroboam's multiple calves (שׁני עגלי זהב, 1 Kgs 12:28) rather than Aaron's singular calf (עגל מסכה).[305] Further, Nehemiah 9:18 alters the wording of Exodus 32 to read unambiguously in the singular (זה). The pluralizing of the terminology in Exodus 32 is therefore more likely indicative of a later polemic against Jeroboam and the Northern cult.[306] Finally, the characterization of the calf as אשׁר העלוך מארץ מצרים and the dedication of the festival (חג ליהוה, v. 5) explicitly relate the image to YHWH.[307] Despite certain ambiguities, there-

303 Cf. *GKC* §145i; *JM* §148a, 150 f.

304 Albertz, *History*, 145.

305 Wyatt proposes that Ex 32 may have originally read אל אלהך ("El is your god…") ("Of Calves and Kings: The Canaanite Dimension in the Religion of Israel," *SJOT* 6:1 [1992], 79). If so, then Ex 34:4, 8 may preserve an older strand of tradition (although still formally dependent on 1 Kgs 12).

306 The historical and literary dependence of Ex 32 on 1 Kgs 12 is almost universally recognized. See, e. g., M. Aberbach and L. Smolar, "Aaron, Jeroboam and the Golden Calves," *JBL* 86 (1967), 129–40; L. R. Bailey, "The Golden Calf," *HUCA* 42 (1971), 97 n.2; E. W. Nicholson, *Exodus and Sinai in History and Tradition* (Oxford, 1973), 74–5; Cross, *CMHE*, 75; Wyatt, "Calves," 72–3; Albertz, *History*, 311 n.60. The likelihood that Jeroboam would have introduced a deity different from the god upon whom the Jerusalem cult was centered is small, given his stated purpose to replace the Jerusalem cult (1 Kgs 12:26–27, 32).

307 Jeroboam is, likewise, said to have appointed a feast that was comparable to the one in Judah (כחג אשׁר ביהודה 1 Kgs 12:32).

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fore, it seems unlikely that the calf-image in Exodus 32 referenced multiple deities. Rather, one deity was in view in the production and consecration of the calf, YHWH.

Furthering this conclusion is the bull image's apparent persistence in the Israelite cult. Although later polemic tended to associated calf images with Baal worship (Hos 8:5, 10:5; cf. Tob 1:5), they appear to have survived Jehu's cultic reform (2 Kgs 10:28 – 29):

וישמד יהוא את־הבעל מישׂראל רק חטאי ירבעם בן־נבט אשׁר החטיא
את־ישׂראל לא־סר יהוא מאחריהם עגלי הזהב אשׁר בית־אל ואשׁר בדן

> Jehu wiped out Baal from Israel. Jehu did not, however, turn aside from the sins of Jereboam, the son of Nebat, by which he caused Israel to sin – that is, the golden calves that were in Bethel and Dan.

That Jeroboam's calves were not removed in Jehu's attempt to eradicate the Baal cult makes it unlikely that this bull imagery was initially appropriated from the god Baal. A more likely candidate, then, is the Canaanite god El,[308] to whom YHWH is often likened in the biblical text.[309]

In the Ugaritic texts, El's bull symbolism appears symbolic of the god's power[310] and fertility,[311] both of which were also claimed by YHWH. Historically, scholars have focused on the fertility aspect of the imagery in Exodus 32, especially in light of the "orgiastic ritual" thought to occur in 32:6.[312] Yet this emphasis appears out of place in the narrative of Exodus.[313] The book does not show the interest in fertility and sterility that so characterizes the patriarchal narratives. "Rather," states Janzen, "the overriding concern is with the deliv-

308 Although Baal is sometimes depicted as a bull (e.g., CTA 10, 11), the title "Bull" refers exclusively to El in Ugaritic literature (note the common expression, *tr 'il 'abh 'il mlk d yknnh*, "the bull El, his father, king El who created him"). El symbolism likely stands behind the biblical title אביר יעקב ("bull of Jacob," Gen 49:24; Ps 132:2, 4) and, perhaps, the imagery of YHWH having horns (e.g., Num 24:8). In this light, it is likely significant that the calf image is set up in Bethel ("house of El"), which is associated with Jacob (Gen 28:18 – 22; 31:13; 35:1, etc.). For others who see El symbolism in the calf imagery, see Cross, *CMHE*, 73 – 5; W. Toews, *Monarchy and Religious Institution in Israel under Jeroboam I* (SBLMS 47; Atlanta: Scholars, 1993), 41 – 6; Wyatt, "Calf," 346 – 7; Day, *Yahweh*, 37 – 9; Albertz, *History*, 78, 144 – 5.

309 On the relationship between El and YHWH in the Hebrew Bible, see Day, *Yahweh*, 13 – 41; Smith, *Early*, 7 – 12.

310 See, esp., P. D. Miller, "El the Warrior," *HTR* 60 (1967), 411 – 31.

311 For the sexual prowess of El, see KTU 1, 23, 31 – 52.

312 For an alternative reading of this verse, see J. Janzen, "The Character of the Calf and Its Cult in Exodus 32," *CBQ* 52 (1990), 597 – 607; cf. Albertz, *History*, 311 n.64.

313 On the West Semitic emphasis on the military connotations of bull imagery, see Keel, *GGG*, 118 – 9.

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erance from the oppressive regime of Pharaoh"[314] and, one might add, the entrance into the occupied Promised Land. The emphasis on power and protection is expressed most clearly by the biblical motif of "going before" (הלך + לפני) the people. Interestingly, this activity is often accomplished by divine representations, whether the pillar of cloud and fire (עמוד ענן /עמוד אש, 13:21; cf. Num 14:14) or the messenger of God (מלאך האלהים, 14:19 – 20; 23:20; cf. v. 23). Indeed, it is the absence of such protection and leading that prompts the demand for the calf. The people specifically ask Aaron for a god "who will go before us" (אלהים אשר ילכו לפנינו, 32:1). Ironically, if not for Moses' intervention, YHWH's divine power would have been directed against Israel for this act (32:7 – 10). These concerns are specifically addressed sporadically throughout the rest of this narrative. In 32:34, YHWH appoints Moses to "lead the people" (נחה את־העם) and promises to send "my messenger to go before you" (לפניך מלאכי ילך; cf. 33:2). When this issue arises again, in 33:12 – 14, YHWH responds by promising his own presence with Moses.

The previous conclusion that the calf was intended as a cultic representation of YHWH has led to the suggestion that the calf served as a pedestal upon which an invisible deity stood. Yet, there is very little to commend this suggestion. Traditionally, this interpretation is reached first in the account of Jeroboam's calves, on which Exodus 32, too a large extent, depends.[315] Jeroboam, in this view, erected the calves in imitation of the cherubim in Jerusalem,[316] where YHWH was thought to sit invisibly. Certainly there is ample iconographic evidence for ancient Near Eastern gods standing on the back of bulls.[317] Yet, bulls standing alone as representations or symbols of deity are not completely absent.[318] Further, if we are correct in assuming that the imagery was appropriated from El (and not Baal), then the pedestal interpretation is even more unlikely, since a

314 Janzen, "Character," 599.

315 Certainly, the present form of the narrative incorporates older traditions, most likely reflecting the origin of a bull cult at Bethel. As mentioned above, however, the attempt to assign Ex 32 to different strata has failed to lead to anything close to a consensus, outside the general agreement on the Deuteronomistic character of vv. 7 – 14 and a few Priestly additions.

316 See, e. g., H. T. Obbink, "Jahwebilder," *ZAW* 47 (1929), 264 – 79; W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (2nd ed.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957), 299 – 301; M. Weippert, "Gott und Stier," *ZDPV* 77 (1961), 103; E. Würthwein, *Das erste Buch der Könige: übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Reprecht, 1977), 165; Albertz, *History*, 144. For a survey of literature, see Hahn, *Goldene*, 333 n.140.

317 *ANEP* 170, 179 – 81; Keel, *GGG*, illuss. 44, 70 – 72, 134a, 137 – 138, 207a – 208; cf. O. Negbi, *Canaanite Gods in Metal* (Tel Aviv, 1976), 21 – 23.

318 Most notable is the bronze figure of a bull dating to Iron Age I, found east of Dothan at an open-air shrine (A. Mazar, "The 'Bull Site' – an Iron Age I Open Cult Place," *BASOR* 247 [1982], 27 – 42; H. Weippert, *Palästina in vorhellenistischer Zeit* [München: Beck, 1988], 407 – 9; Mettinger, *No Graven Image*, 137, 154 – 55; Keel, *GGG*, 118 – 9, illus. 142).

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chief epithet of El is "Bull El" (*tr 'il*). More significant, however, is the fact that there is "no direct evidence, or even insinuation, that the calf is a pedestal"[319] in the Hebrew Bible. Instead, both Exodus 32 and 1 Kings 12 present the calf/calves as (a) divine image(s). Thus, the presentation formula, אלה/הנה אלהיך ישׂראל (Ex 32:4, 8; 1Kgs 12:28), found in both narratives, implies a visual component to the deity.[320] Further, in both texts the statues are treated as images. Aaron is described as building an altar "before it" (לפניו, Ex 32:5), while Jeroboam is presented as "sacrificing to the calves he made" (1Kgs 12:32). Finally, outside these texts, the calf is described as a divine image, not a pedestal. Hosea 8:6 states of the "calf of Samaria": חרשׁ עשׂהו ולא אלהים הוא ("a craftsman made it; it is not a god"), a statement that would be completely unnecessary if it was not conceptualized as such.[321] Likewise, the Chronicler notes that Jeroboam made the calves "as gods" (לאלהים, 2 Chr 13:8).

In the context of Exodus 32, the singular calf represents a singular deity. The presentation formula and dedicatory feast explicitly link the calf to YHWH, and this link is strengthened by the likelihood that this imagery derived from the Canaanite god El (with whom YHWH finds a number of connections in the Hebrew Bible). Interestingly, this imagery symbolizes the power and protection which YHWH had heretofore provided Israel in the wilderness by means of divine representations (e.g., "pillar of cloud and fire," "messenger," etc.). Thus, in the perceived absence of such protection, Aaron makes a substitute image. Although many scholars believe that the calf should be interpreted as a pedestal upon which YHWH stood invisibly, there is nothing to suggest this anywhere in the Hebrew Bible. Instead, the calf is referred to and worshipped just as other

319 Bailey, "Golden," 98.

320 K. van der Toorn concludes that "[t]he interpretation of the tauromorphic image as a divine seat, Yahweh himself remaining invisible, is invalidated by the presentation formula…" ("Iconic," 239 n.27). Note, however, Mettinger's argument that such logic would necessarily mean that the construction אלה הם האלהים המכים את־מצרים ("These are the gods who struck the Egyptians"), in 1 Sam 4:8, means that the "Philistines saw in the ark a direct representation of YHWH in the shape of a box" ("Aniconism," 191). In response, one might point out that the Ark Narrative presents the ark in ways little different from divine images elsewhere (see above, chap. 3.2.4). Further, as Mettinger states elsewhere, the "degree of resemblance" between an image and its referent "may be assumed" but is a "moot point, since…our knowledge of the 'theology of images' in the ancient Near East is still very incomplete" (*No Graven Image*, 22). Thus, as we have seen, standing stones and stylized trees were thought to function in ways similar to iconic images (see above, chap. 3.2). As both van der Toorn ("Iconic," 241 – 2) and, more recently Sommer (*Bodies*, 104), point out, however, it may be that the Philistines are reacting to the ark as a container for a divine image/presence.

321 Cf. Hosea's description of worshippers "kissing calves" (עגלים ישקון, 13:2), an act hardly in keeping with the interpretation of the calves as pedestals for an invisible deity (cf. 1 Kgs 19:18).

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deities were worshipped through their images elsewhere (Ex 32:4–5, 8; 1 Kgs 12:28, 32; Hos 8:6, 13:2; cf. Ps 106:19).

4.2.2.4 Moses as Image of God in Exodus 32–34

In the vacuum left by Moses' absence the people gather against Aaron and demand אלהים אשר ילכו לפנינו ("a god who will go before us"). As we have seen, this description emphasizes divine power and protection and is a prominent characteristic of YHWH in Exodus, accomplished by means of divine representation. In the immediate context of Exodus 32, however, אלהים אשר ילכו לפנינו is clearly meant as a substitute for Moses.[322] This connection between the calf image and Moses is further underscored by the formula, "to bring up from Egypt." This formula, which is applied to the calf image in vv. 4 and 8, is also applied to Moses:

ויקהל העם על־אהרן ויאמרו אליו קום עשה־לנו אלהים אשר ילכו לפנינו
כי־זה משה האיש אשר העלנו מארץ מצרים לא ידענו מה־היה לו

> The people gathered against Aaron and said to him, "Arise, make for us a god who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him."
> (Ex 32:1)

וידבר יהוה אל־משה לך־רד כי שחת עמך אשר העלית מארץ מצרים

> YHWH said to Moses, "Go down because your people, whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves."
> (Ex 32:7)

As we have seen, the divine qualities of the calf are underlined by the description of the calf's creation, worship, and destruction. It is, thus, difficult to avoid the conclusion that, already in Exodus 32, the function of Moses for the people is comparable to a divine representation. His absence, or more specifically, the absence of his protection and leadership described in formulas reserved for YHWH (or his various manifestations), brings about a situation to which the answer is found in the making of a divine image.

The conceptualization of Moses as a divine substitute, however, comes to the fore in the final descent scene of Exodus 34:29–35. In v. 29, Moses descends the mountain with "two tablets of testimony" (שני לחת העדת) in his hands. This description links the final descent to the previous descent scene in 32:15–16.[323] Further, the mountain top scene of chapter 34 corresponds to Exodus 24:12–

322 Cf. Sasson, "Bovine," 384; Moberly, *Mountain*, 46; Hauge, *Descent*, 169.
323 See above, pp. 133 ff.

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31:18 in that both are framed by the tablets.[324] In this way, Exodus 34:29 provides the "positive contrast" to 32:15 – 16. In both narratives, the tablets play a crucial role. In Exodus 32, the destruction of the tablets provides the all-important indication that something has gone horribly wrong. In Exodus 34:29 – 35, the renewed tablets in the hands of Moses demonstrate that the earlier problems have been overcome. Yet, in neither scene do the tablets play the central role.[325] Rather, the function of the tablets in Exodus 32 is to demonstrate the inadequate nature of the calf, which plays the central role. Despite the belief of the people and Aaron that the calf is divine, the description of the tablets as the "work of God" (מעשׂה אלהים) and "the writing of God" (מכתב אלהים, 32:16) is meant to dissuade readers from such an interpretation of the obviously human-made image. Likewise, given the importance of the renewed tablets as the indicator that the covenant is renewed, it is surprising that the tablets actually fall into the background of Exodus 34:29 – 35 in the light of Moses' transfiguration.

After the initial description of Moses' descent with "the two tablets of the testimony," the tablets are not mentioned again and the emphasis of the passage shifts to highlight Moses' face, repeating three times that קרן עור פניו (vv. 29, 30, 35 [פני משׁה]). The scholarly discussion on the correct interpretation of קרן in this context tends to diverge into two camps, those who find in the term a reference to "light"[326] and those who find a reference to "horns."[327] Recent scholarship leans toward the former interpretation. Most notably, M. Haran[328] compares the use of the verb here to the substantive קרנים in Habakkuk 3:4.

ונגה כאור תהיה קרנים מידו לו ושׁם חביון עזו

> [His] brightness is like light / He has קרנים from his hands / There is the covering of his strength.

Due to the terminology of "light" (אור, נגה) in the first line of this verse, Haran argues that קרנים should be read as "rays of light," which he then compares with

324 Ex 34 begins with YHWH's instructions (34:1) and Moses' obedience (v. 4), and concludes with Moses as the divine scribe (vv. 27 – 28), before he descends with the tablets (v. 29).

325 Cf. Kearney, "Creation," 382.

326 E.g., M. Haran, "The Shining of Moses' Face: A Case Study in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature* (ed. W. Boyd Barrick and J. R. Spencer; JSOTSup 31; Sheffield: JSOT, 1984), 159 – 173; Childs, *Exodus*, 609; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 448.

327 E.g., A. Jirku, "Die Gesichtsmaske des Moses," *ZDPV* 67 (1945), 43 – 5; Moberly, *Mountain*, 107; Sasson, "Bovine," 385 – 6; N. Wyatt, "Royal Religion in Ancient Judah," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (ed. F. Stavrakopoulou and J. Barton; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 72. A minority interpretation concludes that Moses' face was disfigured (see, most recently, W. Propp, "The Skin of Moses' Face – Transfigured or Disfigured?," *CBQ* 49 [1987], 375 – 86).

328 Haran, "Shining," 159 – 173.

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other biblical passages that allude to "[t]he splendour surrounding the image of God"[329] (e. g., Ex 24:10; Ezek 1:27 – 28; Ps 104:2). Thus, Haran concludes that, in Exodus 34:29 – 35, Moses' face "shone" because "[s]omething of the divine radiance was imparted…to Moses' face…"[330] Despite the near consensus on this interpretation, the function of such a light on Moses' face is somewhat debated. Many downplay the significance of the imagery, arguing that it served only to reaffirm or legitimate Moses' authority for the people.[331] Yet, as Haran notes, the phenomenon invites comparison with the ancient Near Eastern concept *melammu*, the divine radiance that shone from the head of the gods.[332] Significantly, this divine attribute radiated from all things related to the divine and was also transferable to other beings, including kings.[333] Indeed, in the wider context of the Exodus narrative, there appears to be more going on as the people's response to Moses' face is comparable to the people's response to the Sinai theophany of 20:18 – 19, where they are afraid to approach YHWH upon seeing the "thunder," "lightning," and "smoke" on the mountain. Likewise, in 34:30, when the people saw Moses' face "they were afraid to approach him" (ויראו מגשת אליו). Moreover, as many have noted, the parallelism between Moses' face in 34:29 – 35 and YHWH's face in 33:18 – 23 indicates a basic connection between the two "faces."[334] Moses' request to see YHWH's "glory" (כבוד, v. 18) leads to YHWH granting Moses a vision of his "goodness" (טוב) and the proclamation of his name (שם). Yet, Moses is denied a vision of YHWH's "face" (פנים), since such a vision would be lethal (v. 20). Further, when YHWH causes his "glory" to pass before Moses, YHWH "covers" (שכך) him with his "hand" (כף, v. 22). In contrast, Moses' face is deliberately in view of the Israelites as he proclaims the word of YHWH (34:32, 34) and only covered by a "veil" (מסוה) when he finishes speaking with them (vv. 33, 35). This correspondence is further confirmed by noting the difference in the previous tent scene, where YHWH was represented by the "pillar of cloud" (33:9 – 10). In contrast, 34:29 – 35 presents Moses' face as the sole visible manifestation of YHWH for the people .[335] J. Morgenstern's conclusion is therefore appropriate: "Moses with the shining face is thus the official, earthly representative of Yahwe with the shining face, His substitute on earth as it were…-

329 Haran, "Shining," 159.
330 Haran, "Shining," 159 – 60.
331 See, e. g., N. Sarna, *Exodus* (JPS; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 221; Durham, *Exodus*, 468.
332 Haran, "Shining," 167 – 8.
333 See, e. g., above, pp. 25, 39; cf. S. Sanders, "Old Light on Moses' Shining Face," *VT* 52:3 (2002), 403.
334 See, e. g., J. van Seters, *The Life of Moses: The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus-Numbers* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 360; Hauge, *Descent*, 166; Moberly, *Mountain*, 106; cf. Blum, *Studien*, 71 – 72.
335 Cf. Hauge, *Descent*, 166.

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Moses had become in this story a kind of deity, or at least a semi-divine mortal."[336]

In the context of Exodus 33 – 34, then, the imagery of "light" does make some sense for קרן, especially given the parallels between YHWH and Moses. Nevertheless, the term is certainly a peculiar choice for "light" imagery. If the author wanted to press the concept of "light," one would expect the more common אור. Likewise, if he wanted to make sure his readers recognized the parallel between YHWH and Moses, he could have used כבוד ("glory," cf. 33:22) or הוד ("majesty," "splendor," cf. Num 27:20). Rather, the author chose a term whose basic connotation is indubitably "horn."[337] Moreover, the only other verbal instance of קרן is Ps 69:32, where the hiphil מקרן obviously means "to have horns":

ותיטב ליהוה מור פר מקרן מפריס

This will be pleasing to the Lord more than an ox or a bull with horns (מקרן) and hoofs.

If the interpretation "rays of light" is granted for the substantive in Habakkuk 3:4, it would be the only time such a meaning occurs in the Hebrew Bible.[338] Thus, on the one hand, the immediate context and conceptual parallels between YHWH and Moses lend themselves to the interpretation that Moses' face "shone," but, on the other, the linguistic evidence points in a different direction, i. e. Moses "grew horns."

Whether the correct interpretation of this phenomenon is "light" or "horns," the conclusion is, however, the same. A "horned" Moses also points toward his transformation into a god.[339] Horns were a sign of divinity in the ancient Near East, appearing on temples[340] and divine statues. Since the gods were often represented in human shape, such special attire was often added to distinguish the gods and, less often, divine kings. For example, King Naram-Sin famously had himself depicted wearing a crown of horns on his victory stela.[341] The gods Anu, Enlil, Ishtar, and Marduk are often depicted, literarily and icono-

336 "Moses with the Shining Face," *HUCA* 2:1 (1925), 5.

337 The (derivative) noun is well known in the ancient Near East with cognates in Aramaic, Akkadian (*qarnu*), Syriac (*qarnā*), Phoenician (*qrn*), etc.

338 Cf. Sasson, "Bovine," 386. Sasson also notes the imprudence of appealing to a text like Hab 3:4 to clarify Ex 34:29 – 35: "[Hab 3:4] has been recognized as full of difficulties, in some measures, even corrupt. Some scholars consider an entire stichos to have been lost. Others emend the text radically enough to change every word in the verse" (386 with n.1; cf. Propp, "Skin," 380).

339 Wyatt, "Royal," 72.

340 See E. van Buren, "Concerning the Horned Cap of the Mesopotamian Gods," 325; M. Süring, *The Horn-Motif in the Hebrew Bible and Related Ancient Near Eastern Literature and Iconography* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1980), 270 – 84.

341 Keel, *Symbolism*, plate XIX; Süring, 131 fig. 5.

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graphically, with a crown of horns.[342] Thus, in an inscription detailing the restoration of Marduk's cult image, King Agum-kakrime boasts that he set on the head of Marduk "a tiara with magnificent horns, lordly tiaras, symbolic of divinity…"[343] More pertinent, perhaps, for Exodus 34:29–35, is the common description of both Shamash (the sun god) and Sin (the moon god) as horned.[344]

S. Sanders has recently made the intriguing suggestion that the ambiguities noticed in the Hebrew root קרן, especially here in Exodus 34, may correspond to the Sumerian word SI, which can in fact denote either "light" or "horn."[345] Thus, for example, in the astronomical series *Enūma Anu Enlil*, we read:

> *šumma ūmma si-šu imqut-ma Sîn adir mītūti ibaššū ina barārīti Sîn attalâ išakkan-ma sî=qarnu si=šarūru…*
>
> If the sun's horn (SI) fades and the moon is dark, there will be deaths. (*explanation:*) in the evening watch, the moon is having an eclipse (and in this context,) SI means 'horn', SI means 'shine'…[346]

The commentaries in these texts interpret the omens and inform the reader how to "read" the event. Thus, the person who witnesses the above eclipse should not think of the shining rim of the sun as only "light" but also as, among other things, "horn."[347] Essential to this observation is the equation made in Babylonian texts between the celestial bodies and the gods. The light from the moon, sun, etc., is then interpreted as the "radiance" of Sin, Shamash, etc.[348] The "rays" of the sun, then, could also have been understood as the "horns" of the deity.

Another astronomical commentary greatly expands the semantic field of the term:

> SI = *qarnu*, SI = *šuḫarruru*, SI = *arāmu*, SI = *ṣētu*, SI = *šarūru*, SI = *nūru*
> SI = "horn," SI = "to daze," SI = "to mask," SI = "shining," SI = "radiance," SI = "light."
> (CT 26.43 8:5–10)[349]

342 Van Buren, 318, 321–2.

343 Translation in Foster, *Muses*, 362. On the depiction of Marduk as horned, see Süring, 149–50 and figs. 16–17.

344 On the depiction of Shamash and Sin as horned in Mesopotamia, see Süring, 142–6 and figs. 10–12b; van Buren, 321.

345 Sanders, "Old," 400–06. Sanders is, here, following up on an earlier observation by Propp: "…it is hard to see any connection between 'horn' and 'light', though we should note that Sumerian *SI* can, in fact, denote either a horn or radiance" ("Skin," 381).

346 Text and translation in Sanders, "Old," 403.

347 For the Akk. *qarnu* as crescent of celestial bodies, see also *CAD* Q 137–8.

348 Cf. I. Winter, "Radiance as an Aesthetic Value in the Art of Mesopotamia (with some Indian Parallels)," in *Art: The Integral Vision* (ed. B. Saraswati et al.; New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 1994), 123.

349 Text and translation in Sanders, "Old," 403; cf. *CAD* Š 2:141.

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The conceptual connection between "horn" and "light" is here extended to include the affective world. In other words, just as the קרן of Moses can cause the people to "fear" him (34:30), so also can SI be translated "to daze" or "be numb with terror" (*šuḫarruru*).[350] The range of associations found in the Sumerian SI leads Sanders to compare it with *melammu*. He states, "[t]his phenomenon is not just found in the sky. The range of associations is embodied in the Mesopotamian mythological object called *melammu*, a blinding mask of light."[351] Like SI, *melammu* can also be used to refer to celestial bodies and divine beings. But it is also transferable, "external to the body, even alienable."[352] This last characteristic goes a long way in explaining another issue that has plagued interpreters of Exodus 34:29 – 35, the specific description that קרן עור פני משה ("the skin of Moses' face grew horns"). Propp, for example, presents this description as posing difficulties for any interpretation of Moses as "horned," since "the Bible speaks of the *skin* of Moses' *face*, while we would expect the *head* or *forehead* to sprout horns."[353] But, if the meaning was "horned light,"[354] or a radiance that was simultaneously understood to carry the nuance of "light" and "horns," then "face" is completely understandable.[355] Moreover, if this "horned light" was thought to be an external, alienable characteristic possessed by Moses at the whim of the deity, then even "skin" is understandable. "[I]t is not the face itself," Sanders concludes, "but its surface, the skin, which radiated…and it is possible that the Israelites shrank away from Moses simply because they did not recognize him behind his divine persona."[356] Given the parallels between Moses and the calf and between Moses' "face" and YHWH's "face," it is perhaps more correct to say that, within the Exodus narrative, the Israelites shrank away precisely because they did recognize, if not Moses, then the "divine persona" now made manifest through him.

An alienable, masking, and terror-causing radiance that could be interpreted in terms of the Near Eastern stereotype of a divine being, i. e., a horned bull, fits perfectly the demands of our present text, where the author wishes to draw parallels between Moses and the calf, on the one hand, and Moses and YHWH, on

350 Sanders, "Old," 404; cf. *CAD* Š 3:203 – 4.

351 Sanders, "Old," 404.

352 Sanders, "Old," 404.

353 "Skin," 383 [italics his].

354 This relationship between "horn" and "light" is already present in J. J. M. Roberts translation of קרנים (Hab 3:4) as "horns of light" (*Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A Commentary* [OTL; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991], 153; cf. B. Kedar-Kopfstein, "קֶרֶן," *TDOT* 13:174).

355 If, however, פנים is taken to mean the "front of the head" (N. Wyatt, *"There's Such Divinity Doth Hedge a King"* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005], 210; cf. *HALOT* *פָּנֶה), then even literal horns may not be the problem that Propp makes them out to be.

356 Sanders, "Old," 404.

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the other. Thus, given these parallels, it appears that the people's initial conceptualization of Moses as something of a divine figure, whose substitute was thought even to manifest YHWH, has been validated by the events of Exodus 34:29 – 35, where a "horned/radiant" Moses now serves as the sole visible manifestation of YHWH. Likewise, Hauge concludes, "[w]hatever metaphysical questions are involved, the imagery of 'horned light', related to the interplay of divine and human *pānîm* and set in the context of the Golden Calf, invites the reader to a rather radical understanding of Moses as a divine figure."[357]

As we suggested earlier, the diminishing emphasis on the tablets in Exodus 32 (in the light of the calf) and 34:29 – 35 (in the "horned light" on the face of Moses) points to the conceptual relationship between Moses and the calf. Another aspect of the tablet motif in Exodus 32 and 34:29 – 35 serves to underline this relationship. The juxtaposition of Exodus 31:18 and 32:15 – 16 with 32:1 – 6 contrasts the divine origin of the tablets with the human derivation of the calf and serves to emphasize the profane nature of the latter. In the final descent scene, however, the renewed tablets are found in the hands of a "horned/radiant" Moses (34:29). Although the tablets in the final scene are still considered to be of divine derivation (34:1), Moses' role in the inscribing process is not exactly clear. Indeed, 34:27 – 28 describe Moses as the inscriber of the tablets:

ויאמר יהוה אל־משׁה כתב־לך את־הדברים האלה כי על־פי הדברים האלה כרתי
אתך ברית ואת־ישׂראל ויהי־שׁם עם־יהוה ארבעים יום וארבעים לילה לחם לא
אכל ומים לא שׁתה ויכתב על־הלחת את דברי הברית עשׂרת הדברים

> And YHWH said to Moses, "Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." Now [Moses] was there with YHWH forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

The present position of 34:28 reflects the position of 31:18. Exodus 31:18 describes the role of YHWH in the writing of the tablets and is immediately followed by the calf incident (32:1 – 6). Exodus 34:28, on the other hand, describes the role of Moses in the writing of the tablets and is immediately followed by the description of the "horned light" of Moses' face (34:29 – 35). While 31:18 and 32:16 both function to underline the divine origin of the tablets at the cost of the calf, they likewise contrast the manufacturers. Aaron as the maker of the calf (with his "stylus," Ex 32:4)[358] is compared with YHWH as the "writer" of the tablets. Similarly, in 34:27 – 28, Moses is now elevated to the place of YHWH as the "writer" of the tablets and is now contrasted with Aaron and his calf. By juxtaposing the motifs present at the beginning of the narrative with those at the

357 Hauge, *Descent*, 168.
358 See above, pp. 139 ff.

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end, the author makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that Moses has assumed the people's original conception of him. The calf was made to replace Moses and, given its treatment as divine image, to manifest YHWH. The final descent scene confirms Moses' role as the "container" of divine presence.[359] Moses, not the calf, is the visible extension of YHWH among his people, he inscribes the tablets and "radiates horns."

4.2.2.5 Moses as Image of God in the Book of Exodus

Surprisingly, the elevation of Moses to divine status is not unique in the book of Exodus. In two earlier instances, YHWH is described as promoting Moses to the status of אלהים:

ודבר־הוא לך אל־העם והיה הוא יהיה־לך לפה ואתה תהיה־לו לאלהים

> And (Aaron) shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be his god.
> (Ex 4:16)

ויאמר יהוה אל־משׁה ראה נתתיך אלהים לפרעה ואהרן אחיך יהיה נביאך

> And the Lord said to Moses, "See, I have made you god to Pharaoh, and your brother shall be your prophet."
> (Ex 7:1)

As we have already observed, a literary arrangement of the book of Exodus contains a double commission (3:1 – 6:1; 6:2 – 7:7) and a double covenant (19 – 31 and 32 – 40) schema, which mirror each other in their respective positions. In this schema, the Priestly re-telling of Moses' commission mirrors the renewed covenant of Exodus 34. Yet, these passages do more than simply parallel each other in placement.

Both Exodus 4:16 and 7:1 present a necessary step in YHWH's plan to rescue his people from slavery in Egypt. According to G. Rendsburg, the divine decision to elevate Moses to divine status is a necessary facet in the conflict between Moses and Pharaoh, since the Egyptian Pharaoh was thought to be a god.[360] Moses is, then, elevated to divine status in order to make him Pharaoh's equal.[361] Both texts

359 Hauge, likewise, concludes that, "[w]hile the effects of parallelism seem to add one set of ambiguities to another, the very imagery of the Golden Calf as a locus of divine presence underlines the implications of Moses as a bodily container…" (*Descent*, 170).

360 G. Rendsburg, "Moses as Equal to Pharaoh," in G. M. Beckman and T. J. Lewis (eds.), *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion* (Providence, R.I.: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006), 203.

361 Rendsburg convincingly argues that the correct background for Moses' birth narrative (Ex

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follow a similar sequence in which Moses' authority is in question and YHWH's name is revealed, personally, to Moses prior to his elevation to the nature of deity. The problem in both passages, to which the answer is the promotion of Moses to divine status, is the likely probability that Moses' audience will not pay attention to him. In Exodus 3 – 4, Moses' audience is specifically the people of Israel (3:16, 18; 4:1, 10, 16), although Pharaoh is not absent (3:11). Likewise, in Exodus 6 – 7, the audience is more specifically Pharaoh (6:10 – 13, 28 – 30; 7:1 – 4), while Israel is not absent (6:6 – 8; 12 f.). Nevertheless, the situation, that those to which YHWH is sending Moses will not pay attention to him, is the same.

Moses' reluctance to lead the people from Egypt is presented in series of questions (3:11, 13; cf. 4:1,10), which become the vehicle for the revelation of YHWH's name in 3:14 – 15:

ויאמר אלהים אל־משה אהיה אשר אהיה ויאמר כה תאמר לבני ישראל אהיה
שלחני אליכם ויאמר עוד אלהים אל־משה כה־תאמר אל־בני ישראל יהוה
אלהי אבתיכם אלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב שלחני אליכם זה־שמי
לעלם וזה זכרי לדר דר

> God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am." And he said, "Thus you shall say to the people of Israel, 'I Am has sent me to you.'" And God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the people of Israel, 'YHWH, the god of your fathers, the god of Abraham, the god of Isaac, and the god of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever and this is how I am to be remembered throughout all generations."

The name here revealed to Moses, אהיה אשר אהיה, is "not, by any stretch of the imagination a name…[but] a confession of an essential reality…"[362] It is a revelation of YHWH's character: he is the ever present one, who can accomplish what he has set out to do, in this case, through Moses.[363]

Like Exodus 4:16, 7:1 follows the revelation of YHWH's name to Moses, this time prompted by Pharaoh's question "Who is YHWH?" (מי יהוה, 5:1):

וידבר אלהים אל־משה ויאמר אליו אני יהוה וארא אל־אברהם אל־יצחק ואל־יעקב באל
שדי ושמי יהוה לא נודעתי להם…אמר לבני־ישראל אני יהוה והוצאתי אתכם
מתחת סבלת מצרים והצלתי אתכם מעבדתם וגאלתי אתכם בזרוע נטויה ובשפטים
גדלים ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם והייתי לכם לאלהים וידעתם כי אני יהוה אלהיכם המוציא
אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים והבאתי אתכם אל־הארץ אשר נשאתי את־ידי לתת אתה
לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב ונתתי אתה לכם מורשה אני יהוה

2:1 – 10) is not the so-called "exposed-infant" motif, with its proposed parallel to the birth legend of Sargon of Akkad, but the birth account of the Egyptian god Horus ("Moses," 204 – 8).

362 Durham, *Exodus*, 38.

363 The main point of these chapters is that YHWH will be present with, specifically, Moses. Thus, to Moses' first objection מי אנכי ("Who am I?" 3:11), YHWH answers אהיה עמך ("I will be with you," v. 12; cf. 4:12).

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> God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am YHWH. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El Shadday, but by my name YHWH I did not make myself known to them…Say, therefore, to the people of Israel, 'I am YHWH. I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will deliver you from their slavery and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great acts of judgment. I will take you as my people and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am YHWH, your god, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am YHWH."
> (Ex 6:2 – 3, 6 – 8)

Although the explication of YHWH's name here is not as extensive as it is in Exodus 3 – 4, it is generally assumed that this passage functions, for the Priestly strata, as 3:14 – 15 does for the pre-priestly material. Indeed, as Durham states, "this sequence is as near to such a report as we get in the Priestly materials of the Tetrateuch."[364] Rather than the word-play found in Exodus 3, Exodus 6:2 – 8 emphasizes the "self-introductory formula" (*Selbstvorstellungsformel*),[365] אני יהוה ("I am YHWH," vv. 2, 6, 8), which frames this encounter of God with Moses.[366] Regarding this formula, Zimmerli states: "All das, was Jahwe seinem Volke zu sagen und anzukündigen hat, erscheint als eine Entfaltung der grundlegenden Aussage: Ich bin Jahwe."[367] Nevertheless, as Elliger points out, אלהיך may be added to create a "Heilsgeschichts- oder Huldformel."[368] Moreover, the entire covenant formula, ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם והייתי לכם לאלהים ("I will take you to be my people and I will be your God"), is found in v. 7. Although Exodus 3 is not without covenant language,[369] it is certainly true that Exodus 6 places more emphasis upon it. Indeed, according to Rendtorff, the use of the verb לקח ("take") is extremely significant here, as this is the only time this verb is found in the formula: "[I]t is certainly not by chance that this word appears at this precise point, where God addresses Israel as a people for the first time; for it is only in the immediately preceding narratives that Israel has in fact become a people (cf. Ex. 1.7, 9)."[370]

Interestingly, Exodus 32 – 34 shares many of the characteristics seen in Exo-

364 Durham, *Exodus*, 75.

365 W. Zimmerli, *Gottes Offenbarung: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Alten Testament* (TB 19; München: Kaiser, 1963), 14.

366 Cf. R. Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (trans. M. Khol; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 15.

367 "All that YHWH has to say and to declare to his people appears to be a development of the fundamental assertion: 'I am Yahweh'" (Zimmerli, *Offenbarung,* 20).

368 K. Elliger, *Kleine Schriften zum Alten Testament* (TB 32; München: Kaiser, 1966), 216. See, e. g., אני יהוה אלהיכם, in 6:7.

369 See, e. g., אנכי אלהי אביך אלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב (3:6; 15 f.).

370 Rendtorff, *Covenant,* 16; cf. D. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 86.

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dus 3 – 4 and 6 – 7. The concern here, as well as there, is the making of a people who will belong to YHWH in covenant relationship.[371] Israel's sin did not only threaten the relationship for which YHWH brought Israel out of Egypt, it broke it. In many ways, the people of Israel in Exodus 32 – 34 find themselves in a similar position as the Israelites in Exodus 1 – 15 and, in other ways, their situation is worse. YHWH's judgment of the people, in the light of the calf incident, is comparable to his judgment of the Egyptians (e. g., נגף,"strike with plague" in 32:35 // 7:27; 12:23, 27). This comparison is further strengthened in the text's implication that the Israelites have become like the Egyptians in their use and consequent disposal of their jewelry.

Hauge, among others, points out that the repentant "self-plundering" of the Israelites' jewelry described by the use of the *hitpa'el* form of נחל ("to rid oneself"), in Exodus 33:6, likely alludes to the *pi'el* form in Exodus 3:22 and 12:35 – 36 (cf. 11:2 – 3), the promise and fulfillment of the plundering of the Egyptians.[372] Further, as Hauge states, "[w]ithin the narrative frame, the ownership of such valuables by the former slaves is naturally explained by the episode of Exod. 11.2 – 3 and 12.35 – 36 prepared by Exod. 3. 21 – 22."[373] Thus, "[a]n inversion of this character in a story in which the people's gold has been used for the production of the Golden Calf, corresponds to the implicit connotations of riches of Egyptian origin."[374] As in other situations in the Pentateuch, then, Israel's rebellion in Exodus 32 is seen in light of their Egyptian experience.[375] With their Egyptian riches, they sinned against YHWH by making the calf.

Likewise, just as the presence of YHWH with Moses is the crucial issue in Exodus 3 – 4 and 6 – 7, so also is YHWH's ongoing presence with Israel central to Exodus 32 – 34. It is the absence of Moses, understood as the manifestation of YHWH's presence, which leads to the creation and worship of the calf. Israel's sin, at least initially, means that YHWH cannot dwell among them, lest he destroy them (33:3). Instead, YHWH promises to send his "messenger" (מלאך) before the people (v. 2). This, however, is not enough for Moses: אם־אין פניך הלכים אל־תעלנו מזה ("If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here," 33:15). Indeed, for Moses, the ongoing presence of YHWH with his people is the only evidence that Moses has found favor and that Israel is YHWH's people (33:12 – 16). Further, Gowan's unique interpretation of כבוד ("glory"), in 33:18, suggests that Moses is looking for additional proof that YHWH will indeed be present with him. Examining the way in which כבוד is used elsewhere in the book of Exodus reveals that

371 Cf. Gowan, *Theology*, 80.
372 Hauge, *Descent*, 77 – 78; cf. Moberly, *Mountain*, 61; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 428; Hurowitz, "What Goes in," 19.
373 Hauge, *Descent*, 77.
374 Hauge, *Descent*, 78.
375 See, e. g., Ex 16; Num 11:4 – 35.

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there is not necessarily a problem with Moses' request that YHWH reveal his glory to him (הראני נא את־כבדך). In many of the passages where כבוד occurs, it refers explicitly to a visual manifestation of YHWH's guidance and provision (e.g., Ex 16:7, 10; 24:16, 17; 40:34, 35). Thus, Moses' request to see YHWH's כבוד, following YHWH's promised presence, amounts to a request for proof of that presence.[376]

Moreover, given the order of events recorded in Exodus 3 – 4 and 6 – 7, where Moses' call to lead the people out of Egypt is followed by the revelation of YHWH's name, it is not out of place here that Moses' request to see YHWH's glory, following his renewed call to lead the people from Sinai to Canaan, is answered in terms of the "proclamation" (קרא) of YHWH's name (Ex 33:18 – 19):

ויאמר הראני נא את־כבדך ויאמר אני אעביר כל־טובי על־פניך וקראתי בשם
יהוה לפניך וחנתי את־אשר אחן ורחמתי את־אשר ארחם

> [Moses] said, "Show me your glory." And [YHWH] said, "I will cause my goodness to pass before you and I will proclaim before you the name of YHWH; I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

Just as we saw that the emphasis on the revelation of YHWH's name differs in the contexts of Exodus 3 and Exodus 6 (where the effective nature of YHWH's presence takes center stage and Pharaoh is the main audience), the emphasis in Exodus 33:18 – 34:7 is on the forgiving character of YHWH's presence.[377] Moreover, when combined with the fuller revelation of the character of YHWH, in 34:6 – 7, the emphasis on forgiveness is beyond doubt:

ויעבר יהוה על־פניו ויקרא יהוה יהוה אל רחום וחנון ארך אפים ורב־חסד ואמת
נצר חסד לאלפים נשא עון ופשע וחטאה ונקה לא ינקה פקד עון אבות על־בנים
ועל־בני בנים על־שלשים ועל־רבעים

> YHWH passed before him and proclaimed: "YHWH, YHWH, a merciful and gracious god, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon children and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation.

The danger to the covenant's fulfillment in Exodus 3, and even more so in Exodus 6, is Moses' fear and Egypt's strength. Thus, the revelation of YHWH's name there consists of promises of an effective presence to deliver his people by means of judgment on the Egyptians. Here, however, Israel's own sin endangers

376 Gowan, *Theology*, 232 – 3.

377 Many have noticed the parallel nature of these three passages. Gowan, for example, notes that 33:19 (וחנתי את־אשר אחן ורחמתי את־אשר ארחם) "echoes what God said when he first revealed his name to Moses: *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*, 'I am who I am'" (Gowan, *Theology*, 234; cf. Childs, *Exodus*, 596).

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the covenant and YHWH must be a forgiving god if the covenant is to continue. Certainly the theme of judgment is not absent, and this is not surprising, given the parallels between Israel and Egypt in the sin of the calf, but judgment is not the emphasis at this point.

Likewise, in all three passages, the elevation of Moses to divine status provides the solution to questions regarding Moses' role as YHWH's representative. Although the immediate concern in Exodus 3 – 4 and 6 – 7 appears to be Moses' inability to speak well, ultimately the issue is whether or not Israel and Pharaoh will believe that Moses represents YHWH to them (e. g., 4:1; 6:30). In order for Moses to be taken seriously by his fellow Israelites and the Egyptians, YHWH elevates Moses to the highest recognizable status in their immediate context, in this case, the divine Pharaoh. Likewise, in Exodus 32 – 34, when the crisis over Moses' absence leads the people to create a replacement for him, the calf, YHWH again elevates Moses to divine status. This time, however, the visible evidence of his status is one that mirrors the calf: "the skin of his face radiated horns" (34:29, 30, 35).

4.2.3 Conclusion

The need for a physical representation of YHWH is a constant in the book of Exodus and the key issue in chapters 32 – 34. This need is initially addressed in Moses' call, when he is elevated to divine status in order to combat the divine Pharaoh (7:1). Certainly Moses is not alone in this role: as the people flee Pharaoh, the power and protection of YHWH is carried out by other visible divine manifestations, including the pillar of cloud and fire and the messenger of God. Nevertheless, that Moses remained firmly in this role is seen in the people's reaction to his absence in 32:1 – 6. The absence of Moses brought about the need for another visible, material representation of deity ("make for us a god that will go before us!"). The people attempt to fill the void left by Moses (and, therefore, by YHWH) by making and consecrating a cultic image in the form of a bull-calf. As we have seen, the construction, worship, and destruction of the bull-calf demonstrate that the calf was thought to function as a divine image. However, the possibility that such an image was an appropriate representation of Israel's god is called into question by the juxtaposition of the tablets. Whereas the calf is explicitly tied to human craftsmanship and profane material, the tablets are called "the work/writing of God" (32:15 – 16).

The tablets also point toward the divinity of Moses in 34:29 – 35, which provides the positive contrast to their destruction in chapter 32. Interestingly, whereas the description of the tablets in 32:16 demonstrates the profane nature of the calf, the renewed tablets actually fall to the background in 34:29 – 35 in the

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light of Moses' horns. Further, the position of 31:18, which depicts YHWH inscribing the tablets followed by the calf incident, reflects the placement and function of 34:27 – 28, which appears to depict Moses inscribing the tablets followed by the description of Moses descending the mountain with horns.

Although a majority of scholars believe that the term קרן should be interpreted as "light," in order to reflect the conceptual parallels between Moses and YHWH in Exodus 33:18 – 23, there is little linguistic evidence to support this conclusion. Instead, the term elsewhere always means "horns" (whether substantive or verbal). In the context of chapters 32 – 34, therefore, the better comparison is between Moses and the calf. This is not to say, however, that a parallel between the faces of Moses and YHWH is out of question. It is possible that Moses' face was horned *with light*, thus corresponding to the Sumerian term SI. Nevertheless, whether Moses' face was thought to have literal horns, or to be surrounded by a horned light, the description of Moses in 34:29 – 35, especially in the context of chapters 32 – 34, makes it very difficult to avoid the conclusion that Moses is the sole manifestation of YHWH for the people. Moses, not the calf, is the appropriate manifestation of YHWH.

This interpretation was further confirmed by the overall arrangement of the book: the two calls of Moses (3:1 – 6:1 and 6:2 – 7:7), in the first half of the book, correspond to the double covenant scheme (19 – 31 and 32 – 40), in the second. Exodus 32 – 34, therefore, corresponds to the second commission of Moses in 6:2 – 7:7. Both passages depict a situation where the covenant is in jeopardy, with the conflict being presented as YHWH versus a rival (i. e., Pharaoh in 6:2 – 7:7 and the calf in chaps 32 – 34). Significantly, in both passages the resolution of the conflict is brought about by the elevation of Moses to divine status. Just as Moses is made god before his confrontation with the divine Pharaoh, so also when the creation and worship of the calf threatens the existence of YHWH's people, Moses convinces YHWH to renew the covenant, saves the people from extermination, and appears with horns.

This arrangement can be found at the level of a final, Priestly redaction. Although it is impossible to prove this beyond any doubt, there is enough evidence to make this suggestion plausible. Other than the broader structural parallel presented above, one finds evidence of Priestly activity at the beginning, the end, and almost every major break in the book. This includes the predominantly non-priestly story in Exodus 32 – 34. The Priestly fingerprints on this passage can be seen, for example, in the aforementioned "tablet motif," which functions as a literary and structural device and is found at the beginning, middle, and ending of the story. Further, the entire passage has been brought into the larger Priestly narrative to complete the set pattern of creation, fall, and restoration.

If such a reading of Exodus 32 – 34 is granted, then there may be another

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connection with the Priestly conceptualization of humans as a divine image in the primeval history. As we have mentioned, the exile played an important role in the final development of the Priestly material. In this light, the historical situation surrounding the compositional and editorial activity of the Priestly tradition mirrors the literary setting of Exodus 32 – 34. The catastrophe of 587 BCE, including the destruction of the temple and the exile of the people, might easily have been interpreted as a permanent severing of the relationship between Israel and her god. Yet, according to P, there was from the very beginning precedent for a relationship with God apart from a local, physical sanctuary since the entire cosmos was understood as the creator's sanctuary and human beings as his divine image. It is possible that this becomes the basis for the special intervention of YHWH in Exodus 32 – 34.[378] In the Priestly re-telling of Israel's wilderness period, the people find themselves in a situation similar to the exiles': They are outside the land with no means of manifesting their deity. In a time when Israel is without a tabernacle, outside the land, and in need of a physical reassurance of YHWH's presence, the solution to the problem of divine absence is found in a man. Moses, not a cultic image, becomes the means by which YHWH manifests himself to the people.

4.3 Ezekiel 36 – 37: Israel as the Image of God

4.3.1 Introduction

We will demonstrate in this chapter that the book of Ezekiel displays a conceptualization of humans as the proper manifestation of YHWH similar to the ones we have seen in P and Exodus 34:29 – 35 (in the context of a Priestly redaction of Exodus). In order to do this it will be helpful to demonstrate that the book of Ezekiel can be treated as a literary unit, which preserves the thoughts of the prophet, and that these thoughts can be seen as a response to an exilic,

378 As we have noted, the Priestly literature explicitly anchors the saving actions of YHWH for Israel in the actions of the universal creator for all humanity. Thus, the promise of increase to the patriarchs (Gen 17:2, 6, 16; 18:2; 35:11) and the growth of Israel to a people (Ex 1:7) is grounded in the universal blessing to all of humanity (Gen 1:28; 9:1, 7), which was initially realized in the lineage of Seth (Gen 5); the promise that Israel would inhabit and subjugate the land of Canaan (Gen 17:8; 28:4; 35:12; 48:4; Ex 6:4) is grounded in the command to humanity to "fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28), which is initially realized in the "advance of culture" (Gen 4), as well as the expansion of peoples and the formation of states (Gen 10 – 11). As noted, Israel's cultic institutions (building and dedication of the sanctuary) and liturgical festivals (Sabbath) are grounded in the creation of the world. Further, the saving actions of YHWH for Israel were designed to provide hope for the exiles, who needed to trust that YHWH would not leave them to die out, scattered throughout the world.

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Babylonian setting. In the light of these conclusions, then, we will be in a better place to see that Ezekiel's focus on cultic images goes beyond mere polemics but makes use of both Mesopotamian and Israelite cultic traditions and rituals to insinuate that Israel should have been and will become the proper representation of YHWH.

4.3.1.1 Composition

The book of Ezekiel has, historically speaking, enjoyed a unique status among the classical prophets. In contrast to the discussions regarding the divisions and stratification of Isaiah and Jeremiah, most nineteenth-century critical scholars held that the book of Ezekiel relays the structure and thought of a single mind. The opinion of S. R. Driver is typical of both American and European scholarship during this period: "No critical question arises in connexion with the authorship of the book, the whole from the beginning to the end bearing unmistakably the stamp of a single mind."[379]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, this consensus began to break down. H. McKeating points out that within only a few decades of Driver's statement the opinions on the book were so diverse "that almost the only thing about Ezekiel on which scholars appeared to be agreed was that the book did not 'bear the stamp of a single mind.'"[380] Although questions regarding the unity and authorship of the book can be traced all the way back to G. Oeder in 1756,[381] G. Hölscher made the first serious challenge in 1924, when he identified only 170 verses as originating with the prophet.[382] Much like B. Duhm's analysis of the book of Jeremiah, Hölscher distinguishes between the poetic and prose sections of Ezekiel, determining that only the poetic portions are to be assigned to the original prophet.[383]

Although these types of questions continued in some quarters, a new era dawned in the study of Ezekiel in the middle of the twentieth century. McKeating

379 S. R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913), 261; cf. R. Smend, *Der Prophet Ezechiel* (Leipzig, 1880), xxi.

380 H. McKeating, *Ezekiel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 31 – 2; cf. G. Cooke, *Ezekiel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936), v.

381 G. Oeder, *Freye Untersuchung über einige Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Halle, 1771). As noted by S. Spiegel, "Ezekiel or Psuedo-Ezekiel?" *HTR* 24 (1931), 247.

382 G. Hölscher, *Hesekiel: Der Dichter und das Buch: Eine literarkritische Untersuchung* (Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1924).

383 Hölscher attributes much of the book to a fifth-century Zadokite redactor located in Jerusalem. Hölscher does reject some poetic passages as being inconsistent with Ezekiel's general meter and accepts a few prose sections as perhaps being characteristic of the prophet himself. On the relationship between Hölscher and Duhm, see R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 823 – 25.

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describes this era as "striking" in the degree of the consensus reached on four fundamental points: 1) the "book's ostensible placing of the original prophet in the context of the exile"; 2) the location of Ezekiel's ministry in Babylonia; 3) the general "disillusionment with, and abandonment of, the purely literary-critical techniques…and an espousal of form-critical and tradition-history methods"; and 4) the "readiness to accept that there is a substantial body of material which goes back to the prophet himself or at least to the exilic period close to his lifetime."[384]

In many respects, W. Zimmerli's monumental commentary on Ezekiel is characteristic of this new phase.[385] Indeed, Zimmerli is often cited as the principal exponent of the above-mentioned form-critical and tradition-historical methods during this period. Zimmerli applies these methods to Ezekiel in order to trace the book's dependence on existing forms and traditions and the process of growth by which it was expanded.[386] These efforts lead him to a number of conclusions that remain influential in Ezekiel studies. Among Zimmerli's more important conclusions are: 1) that the prophet's original form of delivery was oral and that these forms are still detectable in the text; 2) that a portion of the words of Ezekiel were originally written down by the prophet (e. g., Ezek 8 – 11); and 3) that one can detect multiple stages of redaction and expansion by the prophet and, later, by a group of disciples. These stages are so closely related that it is often impossible to distinguish one from the other.[387] Significantly, then, Zimmerli concludes that, despite the detection of complex forms, traditions, and redactions, "[the book of Ezekiel] preserves for us on the whole the peculiar characteristics of the prophet."[388]

Since Zimmerli, many recent studies focus on the "unifying force" of the book, whether this entails investigating, on the one hand, the "editorial end of the redaction as a creative and unifying force" or, on the other, "the definitive hand of the prophet himself in composing, writing, and organizing his oracles."[389] The works of R. E. Clements and T. Collins are representative of the former position, while the latter is seen in the work of, among others, M. Greenberg.

Despite certain disagreements, the works of Clements and Collins echo many

384 McKeating, 43 – 44.

385 W. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel 1 – 24* and *Ezechiel 25 – 48* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969); Eng. tr.: *Ezekiel 1* and *Ezekiel 2* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979, 1983); cf. W. Zimmerli, "The Special Form- and Traditio-Historical Character of Ezekiel," *VT* 15 (1965), 515 – 527.

386 Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 68 – 74; cf. J. Wevers, *Ezekiel* (CB; London: Thomas Nelson, 1969), 22 – 30.

387 Joyce, likewise, speaks of the "marked homogeneity of the Ezekiel tradition" and the "close family resemblance" that the primary and secondary materials share (*Ezekiel*, 12).

388 Zimmerli, "Special Form," 515.

389 Kutsko, *Between*, 7.

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of Zimmerli's conclusions, specifically regarding the editorial restraint of later redactors. Clements, for example, argues that "virtually all the substantive material" in the book of Ezekiel belongs to the sixth century BCE. Thus, the material assigned to the prophet and the material assigned to later redactors address a similar situation and have a similar aim: "The shape that has been given to [the book of Ezekiel] has made it into a charter for the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple and for the restoration of its cultus after the disaster of 587 B.C."[390] Likewise, Collins argues that, although "revision," "rewriting," and "a great deal of interpretation" is apparent in the book, there are good reasons for concluding that "the work of rewriting was done either under the supervision of Ezekiel himself or that of a like-minded disciple…"[391] and that a "first edition" of the book "could easily have been produced within a few decades after 587 BCE (say around 570 – 560)."[392]

While the apparent homogeneity of the book of Ezekiel has led some to argue that the editorial process responsible for the additions and rewriting must have been accomplished by those very familiar with the prophet's thought and, usually, within decades of the prophet's lifetime, others believe that this resemblance is to be explained by the fact that the prophet himself is responsible for, if not all, a vast majority of it. Indeed, proponents of this position are skeptical of modern scholarship's ability to make any distinctions among such material. M. Greenberg, for instance, condemns the "unexamined assumptions and conventions of modernity" that have "deeply affected scholars,"[393] and argues that "[t]here is only one way that gives any hope of eliciting the innate conventions and literary formations of a piece of ancient literature, and that is by listening to it patiently and humbly."[394] According to Greenberg, one must "immerse" oneself in the literature until its features become apparent. If these features are then found interwoven into the various genres, topics, and structures, then the a priori conclusions of a secondary hand are unjustified. Greenberg concludes that the book of Ezekiel reflects the thoughts and theology

390 R. E. Clements, "The Ezekiel Tradition: Prophecy in a Time of Crisis," in *Israel's Prophetic Tradition: Essays in Honour of Peter R. Ackroyd* (ed. R. Coggins et al.; Cambridge : Cambridge University, 1982), 133.

391 T. Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah: The Redaction Criticism of the Prophetical Books* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 92 – 93.

392 Collins, *Mantle*, 93 – 94. Although closer to the views of Clements, Joyce is a more recent proponent of this position. See, e. g., Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 7 – 16. Albertz also accepts that the book was composed in the first and second generations of the school of Ezekiel, primarily in Babylon, with a final phase in, perhaps, Yehud (*Israel in Exile*, [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 352 – 3).

393 M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1 – 20* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 20. Greenberg cautions that modern scholars misjudge ancient literary conventions by assuming that they will not contain complex structures, diverse themes, and varied genres.

394 Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1 – 20*, 21.

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of "a single mind": "The persuasion grows on one as piece after piece falls into the established patterns and ideas that a coherent world of vision is emerging, contemporary with the sixth-century prophet and decisively shaped by him, if not the very words of Ezekiel himself."[395] Although not as conservative as Greenberg, many hold the opinion that the present form of the book of Ezekiel includes later expansion and editing, but that the continuity of later layers with the former makes delineation extremely difficult.[396]

The remarkable resilience of the book of Ezekiel to the scholarly penchant for stratification and division is a testament to the book's integrity and coherence. Regarding the book's structure, for instance, Joyce notes that Ezekiel is "the most orderly of the prophetic books."[397] He acknowledges, however, that it is difficult to know how to assess this orderly structure, that is, whether or not it points to evidence of original authorship by the prophet or to the work of later editors. He concludes that, "[a]s with the theology and style of Ezekiel, we are probably dealing here with a genuine feature of the work of the prophet Ezekiel that has nevertheless been heightened in the course of redaction…"[398] Further, many note the consistency of identifiable themes, such as divine presence and absence, as well as the characteristic phraseology and terminology that occur throughout the book.[399] Interestingly, as Joyce hints at above, even those who oppose the apparent consensus have done so on the grounds that the singleness of structure and uniformity of style is a tell-tale sign of later redactors.[400] Cer-

395 Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1 – 20*, 27; cf. *idem*, "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration," *Int* 38 (1984), 185.

396 See, e. g., L. Boadt, "Textual Problems in Ezekiel and Poetic Analysis of Paired Words," *JBL* 97 (1978), 489 – 99; S. Niditch, "Ezekiel 40 – 48 in Visionary Context," *CBQ* 48 (1986), 208 – 24; G. Matties, *Ezekiel 18 and The Rhetoric of Moral Discourse* (SBLDS 126; Atlanta: Scholars, 1990); J. Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife* (SBLDS 130; Atlanta: Scholars, 1992; D. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* (2 vols.; NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997 – 98); T. Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* (VTSup 76; Leiden: Brill, 1999); Kutsko, *Between*, 5 – 10; Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 352 – 3; Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 7 – 16; Levtow, *Images*, 153 – 9.

397 Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 42.

398 Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 42.

399 See, for example, Block, *Ezekiel 1 – 24*, 9 – 59; Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 3 – 60; Bodi, *Erra.* Kutsko, for example, highlights terms unique to Ezekiel, such as גלולים, and phrases, such as, בן אדם (over 90 times), אדני יהוה (over 200 times), וידעו/תם כי־אני יהוה (over 70 times, occurring at the end of oracles) (*Between,* 9). For the latter expression, see also Zimmerli, *I Am Yahweh* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 29 – 98.

400 Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 14 – 16. For examples of the more recent attempts to establish a refined stratification of Ezekiel, see J. Garsche, *Studien zum Ezechielbuch: Eine redaktionskritische Untersuchung von Ez 1 – 39* (Bern: Lang, 1974); H. Schulz, *Das Todesrecht im Alten Testament: Studien zur Rechtsform der Mot-Jumat-Sätze* (BZAW 114; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1969), 167 – 87; H. Simian, *Die theologische Nachgeschichte der Prophetie Ezechiels: Form- und traditions kritische Untersuchung zu Ez. 6; 35; 36* (FB 14; Würzburg: Echter, 1974); F. Hossfeld, *Untersuchungen zu Komposition und Theologie des Ezechielbuches* (FB

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tainly such diverse conclusions based on the same information highlight the inherent circularity of many of these arguments.[401] However, there is another avenue of research that makes the more radical conclusions more difficult to sustain.

The recognition that, in Ezekiel, we see the development and implementation of the writing process is not a new opinion. In the nineteenth century, H. Ewald argued that Ezekiel is primarily a written composition[402] and, a few decades later, H. Gunkel suggested something very similar.[403] Yet, only with Zimmerli do these observations begin to influence theories on the development of the text:

> The possibility that a great part of the transmission in the "school" and the "updating of tradition" of many oracles took place in Ezekiel's house by the prophet himself is not to be dismissed out of hand. That the prophet himself knew something of school instruction, which is phenomenologically very different from the older prophetic preaching in public, is made very clear by passages such as chs. 18, 33:1 – 9, 10 – 20. Thus besides the oral proclamation of rhythmically composed sayings, which continued the manner of preaching of the earlier prophets, we must reckon that the prophet himself undertook the secondary work of learned commentary upon and further elaboration of his prophecies, i. e. with a kind of "school activity."[404]

As already noted, Zimmerli observes at least two stages of expansion in the book, the first by the prophet and the second by a group of disciples. Zimmerli refers to the second stage as *Nachinterpretation*, which E. Davis defines as the "successive development of kernel elements through modification and expansion."[405] This "modification and expansion" is, by definition, restricted by the original work (either primary or secondary) of the prophet. Such restrictions are the reason why many find it difficult to distinguish between the various layers and make the more radical attempts at stratification less than convincing.

Like Ewald before her, E. Davis argues that the book of Ezekiel was primarily a written composition and, thus, represents a shift in the "prophetic enterprise,

20; Würzburg: Echter, 1977); K.-F. Pohlmann, *Das Buch des Propheten Hesekiel/Ezekiel: Kapitel 1 – 19* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 22 – 49.

401 Cf. Joyce observes that "Garsha's stratifications have to be so minutely detailed precisely because there is no clear-cut distinction between the style and theology of Ezekiel and of those who followed him; but it is this same 'family resemblance' between primary and secondary material that allows Greenberg to imply that it all comes from the prophet himself" (*Ezekiel*, 16).

402 H. Ewald, *Die Propheten des Alten Bundes: Jeremja und Hezeqiel mit ihren Zeitgenossen* (2nd ed; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1868).

403 H. Gunkel, "Die israelitische Literatur," in *Die Orientalischen Literaturen* (ed. P. Hinnenberg; Berlin/Leipzig: Teubner, 1906), 82.

404 Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 71.

405 E. Davis, "Swallowing Hard: Reflections on Ezekiel's Dumbness," in *Signs and Wonders: Biblical Texts in Literary Focus* (ed. J. C. Exum; Semeia Studies 18; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989), 234.

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whose locus and medium are the text."[406] What is new in Davis' thesis, however, is that she convincingly explains even those passages often cited as evidence of oral delivery by means of literary features[407] and provides a plausible socio-religious reason for this shift in prophetic discourse. According to her, this shift in Ezekiel reflects the concurrence of Ezekiel's prophetic career with the effects of the Babylonian exile on the need to produce and compile sacred traditions in order to interpret the present events (i. e., the destruction of the temple and the exile) in that light.[408]

The importance of Davis' observation is found in the notion, already hinted at by Zimmerli, that the updating process becomes increasingly restricted with the move toward textuality.[409] Furthermore, according to J. Schaper, such a move was done consciously:

> The main reason for the writing down and 'publication' of prophetic oracles in written form or with the help of written materials…seems to have been the desire to conserve the divine word and render it *immutable*. Contrary to prophetic practices in the early monarchic Israel and to earlier forms of 'writing prophecy,' one was no longer prepared to expose the divine oracle to interpretation and thus change.[410]

If Davis is correct, and the book of Ezekiel is primarily a written composition, then it is also likely that the distance between oral prophecy and scribal elaboration/interpretation would be merged into a time frame that includes the prophet's own lifetime. Moreover, with the implementation of textuality, even secondary elaboration and interpretation would have been done in a consciously consistent way. Thus, it becomes increasingly difficult to make any firm separation between those aspects, not only in Ezekiel's activity,[411] but also in the activity of successive scribes, "whose responsibility it was to *preserve* and also to interpret (the two acts never remained entirely separate) the textual tradition."[412]

It is therefore not surprising that scholars generally recognize the need to treat the book of Ezekiel as a literary unity. This is not to say that one is dealing with the very words of the prophet throughout, only that these words preserve

406 E. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989), 38.

407 "The approach taken here posits no bifurcation between a supposed oral phase of [Ezekiel's] activity and a subsequent 'scholarly' process of recording and expanding the discourse, such as Zimmerli proposes. Rather it is likely that Ezekiel composed his oracles in writing, yet in a manner deeply imbued with the forms and practices of traditional oral prophecy" (Davis, *Swallowing*, 37).

408 Davis, "Swallowing," 217, 224.

409 Davis, "Swallowing," 229.

410 J. Schaper, "Exilic and Post-Exilic Prophecy and the Orality/Literacy Problem," *VT* 55 (2005), 335 – 36.

411 Davis, "Swallowing," 234.

412 Davis, "Swallowing," 231.

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the teaching and thoughts of Ezekiel. Furthermore, although the book likely has a complex history of development, it was probably nearly complete by the end of the sixth century and, thus, whether *Grundtext* or *Nachinterpretation*, the issues addressed remain similar: exile and restoration.

4.3.1.2 Setting

As D. Bodi points out, there exists an established tradition in the study of Ezekiel ("over one hundred years old") that has sought to reveal "the Babylonian linguistic, cultural and literary influence on the Book of Ezekiel."[413] Given Bodi's extensive treatment,[414] we will only seek to summarize (in selective and representative fashion) the history of scholarship on this issue. Our goal is to demonstrate the likelihood of a Mesopotamian setting for the book of Ezekiel and the consequent plausibility that the traditions and conceptions of such a setting influenced the themes and motifs of the book.

With the publication of commentaries by Fohrer[415] and Zimmerli,[416] a new phase dawned in the study of Ezekiel. McKeating describes this new era as "striking" in the degree of the consensus reached on certain fundamental points.[417] Two of those points coincide with our purposes here: 1) "There is a considerable degree of acceptance of the book's ostensible placing of the original prophet in the context of the exile" and 2) "There is a general abandonment of the theories that locate Ezekiel's ministry, in part or in whole, anywhere other than Babylonia."[418]

The suggestion that Ezekiel's ministry was primarily or even exclusively located in Judah derives from the book's focus on the fate of the community in Jerusalem and the seeming first-hand accounts of temple activities. Indeed, according to McKeating, the desire to take seriously this Judean focus led to a situation, in the early twentieth century, where "the idea that [Ezekiel] exercised *some* sort of Palestinian ministry became common enough to be regarded as the

413 Bodi, *Erra*, 35. He further states that "[t]he issue of the Babylonian influence on the Book of Ezekiel arose as soon as Assyriology established itself as a discipline." Bodi begins his summary with F. Delitzsch, *The Hebrew Language Viewed in the Light of Assyrian Research* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1883).

414 See, esp., Bodi, *Erra*, 35 – 51; cf. S. Spiegel, "Ezekiel or Pseudo-Ezekiel?," 244 – 321; S. Garfinkel, "Studies in Akkadian Influences in the Book of Ezekiel" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1983), 1 – 11; O. Keel, *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst* (SBS 84/85; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977), 361 – 83; Kutsko, *Between*, 14 – 23.

415 G. Fohrer, *Ezechiel* (HAT 13; Tübingen, 1955); cf. *idem*, *Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel* (BZAW 72; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1952).

416 Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* and *Ezekiel 2*.

417 See above, p. 165 – 6.

418 McKeating, 43.

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prevailing orthodoxy."[419] This emphasis resulted in some extreme positions. C. C. Torrey, for example, argues that the majority of the book was written in Jerusalem during the third century BCE and was only later adapted to fit an exilic time period.[420] Moving in the other chronological direction, J. Smith attributes the book to a seventh-century Palestinian setting.[421] Less extreme is V. Herntrich, who attributes the book to its self-proclaimed sixth-century setting – the prophet's recorded ministry restricted to Jerusalem before 586 (forming much of chaps 1 – 39), with a later redactor responsible for chapters 40 – 48 as well as any other material that might reflect a Babylonian ministry.[422]

By contrast, G. Cooke challenges the logic behind these theories by reasoning that a Babylonian location would not necessarily restrict the limit of Ezekiel's thoughts and concerns for his homeland and that distance should not be an argument against "the range of a prophet's message": "Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah could address nations far away from Jerusalem; why not Ezekiel, in the opposite direction? Tyre and Egypt came within his purview, why not the land of Judah?"[423] S. Spiegel, likewise, responds to the theories on a late Jerusalem setting by recourse to Assyriological evidence, validating a Babylonian setting for and influence on the book.[424]

In comparison, recent scholarship has nearly abandoned the earlier theories.[425] The return of biblical scholarship to a sixth-century Babylonian setting

419 McKeating, 37.

420 C. C. Torrey, *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy* (New Haven: Yale University, 1930), 98 – 101.

421 J. Smith, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (London, 1931), 15 – 21.

422 V. Herntrich, *Ezechielprobleme* (Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1932), 127 – 30. Also less radical are the suggestions that the book of Ezekiel reflects the prophet's "dual venue." See, e. g., H. W. Robinson's statement on the matter: "[T]he chief difference from the conventional view will be that we interpret much of the earlier half [of the book] with the background of Jerusalem and Judea, and not of Babylon and the exiles, and that we have no need to raise difficult psychical theories as to Ezekiel's telepathy and clairvoyance" (*Two Hebrew Prophets: Studies in Hosea and Ezekiel* [London: Lutterworth, 1948], 77 – 8; cf. A. Bertholet, *Hesekiel* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/P. Siebeck, 1936]. For a contemporary proponent of this view, see W. Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1 – 19* [WBC; Waco: Word, 1986], xxv).

423 Cooke, xxiii-xxiv. Greenberg echoes Cooke's conclusions: "That Ezekiel in exile should be preoccupied with Jerusalem's fate is not astonishing. But what of addressing an audience (Jerusalem) hundreds of miles away? Here appearances can mislead. Prophecies against foreign nations…always involve an incongruity between the ostensible audience…and the real audience…In the same way we may suppose that an exiled prophet's address to Jerusalem would really have been aimed at the ears of his proximate audience" (*Ezekiel 1 – 20*, 16 – 17).

424 Spiegel, "Pseudo Ezekiel?," 244 – 321; *idem*, "Toward Certainty in Ezekiel," *JBL* 54 (1935), 145 – 171. Unlike Cooke, Spiegel does not maintain an exclusively Babylonian ministry, but suggests that some of Ezekiel's earlier sermons may have come from Jerusalem.

425 With some notable exceptions, see, e. g., Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1 – 19*, xxiii-xxix; cf. above, n.400.

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for the book is seen in Fohrer's examination of Ezekiel. For example, in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Fohrer argues that the transfer of Ezekiel's ministry to a purely or partly Palestinian location finds its point of departure in isolated passages, "which must be interpreted one-sidedly or on the basis of certain presuppositions," and involves "far-reaching textual alterations," "transpositions of large sections of the book of which there is no convincing evidence," and "the assumption of an uncommonly thorough revision of the book by the redactor."[426] By the late 1960s, Fohrer is able to list an impressive array of scholars (Cooke, M. Schmidt, Zimmerli, Eichrodt, Rowley, etc.) who "have maintained the view that Ezekiel prophesied among the deported exiles and that the book contains the written deposit of his preaching."[427] More recently, Kutsko defends this view, reasonably concluding that the Jerusalem emphasis and the apparently eye-witness accounts of events at the temple "produce no insurmountable obstacle" so long as three points are allowed: 1) "Ezekiel lived in Jerusalem before the first deportation"; 2) "correspondence went back and forth between Babylonia and Jerusalem"; and 3) one allows room for "literary license."[428]

4.3.1.3 Mesopotamian Background and Influence

Given the historical consensus on the Babylonian setting of Ezekiel, it should come as no surprise that Mesopotamian influences on the book have long been noted. Bodi, for example, lists over a century's worth of important iconographic, philological, and thematic studies that seek to explain Ezekiel by recourse to a Babylonian milieu.[429] We will highlight a few of these studies in the light of their importance for our study. Specifically, we will mention those that utilize Mesopotamian literary influences, either specifically or in general, and Mesopotamian themes and motifs that are to some degree concerned with the conceptualization of divine presence.

Commentators have noted that a number of *hapax legomena* found in Ezekiel can be explained by recourse to an Akkadian cognate.[430] In the first chapter of his 1983 dissertation, "Studies in Akkadian Influences in the Book of Ezekiel," S.

426 Fohrer, *Introduction*, 406 – 7.
427 Fohrer, *Introduction*, 407.
428 Kutsko, *Between*, 17.
429 Bodi, *Erra*, 35 – 51.
430 Zimmerli claims that there are over 130 words found only in Ezekiel (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 23). L. Boadt emends this slightly to "130 words found only in, or overwhelmingly found in this book" ("Ezekiel, Book of," *ABD* 2:718). Bodi's review of the scholarship reveals important linguistic studies utilizing Akkadian from F. Delitzsch (1883) to the more recent Ph.D. dissertation of S. Garfinkel (1983). Such recourse is now commonplace in almost all Ezekiel commentaries.

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Garfinkel evaluates over seventy proposed Akkadian etymologies with words or phrases unique to Ezekiel, determining that about 70% are either "possible," "probable," or "definite" derivations.[431] The following chapters then present a thematic study demonstrating the likelihood that the book of Ezekiel was influenced by Mesopotamian traditions and literature.

Specifically, Garfinkel seeks to clarify Ezekiel 2:6a and 3:22 – 27, two problematic passages within Ezekiel's prophetic call narrative, by recourse to Mesopotamian incantation material. The problem in Ezekiel 2:6a is that the enigmatic כי clause that should provide the reason for the command אל־תירא ("do not be afraid")[432] appears to do the exact opposite. This is reflected in most translations:[433]

ואתה בן־אדם אל־תירא מהם ומדבריהם אל־תירא כי סרבים וסלונים אותך ואל־עקרבים אתה יושב

> And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them, and do not be afraid of their words, though (כי) briers and thorns surround you and you live among scorpions.

Instead of establishing the motive for courage, the above translation demonstrates that fear is considered a very reasonable response. Garfinkel, however, observes that the metaphors "briers and thorns" and "scorpions" are not commonly applied to humans and, if such is the case here, it may be unique in the Hebrew Bible.[434] Further, he notes that similar terminology occurs in a *Maqlû* incantation, where the metaphors symbolize a protective force (*Maqlû* III 153 – 4):

> *siḫil ^{iš}balti anāku ul tukabbasinni*
> *zigit zuqaqīpi anāku ul tulappatinni*
>
> I am the bush's thorn, so that you (sorceress) cannot step on me!
> I am the scorpion's sting, so that you (sorceress) cannot touch me![435]

431 Garfinkel, "Studies," 168. See, esp., his summary chart on pp. 14 – 17.

432 This is the typical function of the כי clause immediately following the command to be fearless (e. g., Gen 21:17; 35:17; 46:3; Deut 3:3, 22; Josh 10:8, 25; Isa 41:10; 43:1, 5; 54:4; Jer 1:8; 10:5).

433 See, e. g., NIV, KJV, ESV, JPS, etc.

434 The Hebrew terms סרבים וסלונים are extremely rare. סרבים is a *hapax legomenon* while סלונים appears also in 28:24. The description of the people as "briers and thorns" occurs elsewhere only in Mic 7:4 (using different terminology) and Ezek 28:24 (which may be an expansion or clarification of 2:6). עקרבים ("scorpions") is likewise a rare term and, outside of Ezek 2:6, never used as a metaphor for the people.

435 For text and translation, see S. Garfinkel, "Of Thistles and Thorns: A New Approach to Ezekiel II 6," *VT* 37:4 (1987), 436; cf. *CAD* B 65a, Z 164a.

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Here, the one reciting the incantation is rendered untouchable by means of thorns and scorpions. Understood this way, the admonition in Ezekiel makes better sense: "And you, mortal, do not fear them and do not fear their words *because* briars and thorns are with you and you sit among scorpions." In this light, Ezekiel is being assured of the inability of the people to harm him due to divine protection.[436]

Garfinkel's second proposal involves the dumbness and immobility of Ezekiel in 3:22 – 27. Here also Garfinkel proposes that Mesopotamian incantation texts aid our understanding. He observes that the maladies that ail Ezekiel in this passage are found frequently throughout incantation literature.[437] Garfinkel lists a number of representative incantations, where speech disorders appear alone or, more significantly, in conjunction with paralysis.[438] Finally, he turns to the seventh-century BCE *Ludlul* poem, which he believes "may have served as a literary source for Ezekiel" (*Ludlul* II, 75 – 79, 84 – 85, 95 – 98):[439]

> They have taken hold of my noble mouth…My lips…have become like a deaf-mute. My loud outcry [they turned into] silence…My arms…have both become paralyzed…Paralysis has seized my entire body…Stiffness has seized my arms…My feet have forgotten [the art of] mobility…A snare is laid on my mouth and a bar blocks my lips…My house has turned into a prison for me…My flesh is a manacle; my arms inactive. My own fetters are my collapsed feet.[440]

Besides the similarity between Ezekiel's dumbness and immobility, Garfinkel also points out that "[o]ne may wonder if the initial command to Ezekiel to remain closed up in his house does not derive, in some manner, from such a depiction of the house as a prison,"[441] and that the speaker in *Ludlul* finds

436 Cf. Block, *Ezekiel 1 – 24*, 120 f. In other call narratives, divine presence and protection is the reason provided for the command to be fearless (e. g., Ex 3:12; Judg 6:12, 16; Jer 1:8, 19).

437 Garfinkel also proposes that the somewhat unusual use of יד־יהוה in Ezek 3:22 (cf. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*,193) is comparable to the function of "the hand of god" in another Maqlu incantation: "loss of mind, the hand of a goddess (*qāt ištar*), the hand of a god (*qāt ili*)…they seized my mouth (*pîya uṣabbitū*)…they have taken away my speech…" ("Studies," 155 – 6; cf. W. G. Lambert, "An Incantation of the Maqlû Type," *AfO* 18 [1957/58], 288 – 9).

438 Garfinkel also notes that the Akkadian incantation literature left its mark on the Aramaic incantation texts such that "the theme of binding is so common that *'îs(û)rā* (literally, "binding") is a term used for the charm itself" (Garfinkel, "Studies," 167).

439 Garfinkel is aware that, technically speaking, *Ludlul* is not an incantation. Nevertheless, following Lambert, Garfinkel argues that much of the poem is "reminiscent of incantation literature" and that the author was obviously "steeped in magic literature." Lambert notes that the "chief formal difference" between *Ludlul* and the incantations is that "the incantations are written in third person" (Lambert, *Babylonian*, 22, 26 – 27). The possibility that Ezekiel would have been familiar with the poem is supported by the argument that *Ludlul* is generally considered to have been a "classic of Babylonian literature in the seventh century B.C." (Garfinkel, "Studies," 163 and n.63; cf. Lambert, *Babylonian*, 26).

440 Text and translation in Garfinkel, "Studies," 164 – 165.

441 Garfinkel, "Studies," 165.

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himself in a situation similar to that of Ezekiel. Both are attempting to make known the gods' desires, for the good of the land and, in both, the populace rejected their views and turned against them.[442] Thus, Garfinkel concludes that "[s]ince the premises were so similar, the outcomes might be equally appropriate. Ezekiel's use of the genre, therefore, would not be surprising, but was, rather, a very logical resource from which to draw."[443]

Whether or not one accepts Garfinkel's suggestion that *Ludlul* directly influenced Ezekiel, the explanatory force of the broader suggestion that Ezekiel is consciously using Mesopotamian motifs makes better sense than those interpretations that rely on psychological or medical evidence, which are anyway impossible to verify.[444] More intriguing for the purposes of this thesis is that Ezekiel may have been familiar with (and even influenced by) Mesopotamian incantation texts. Garfinkel's conclusion is thus significant: "Ezekiel may, indeed, have borrowed and modified the description of dumbness and immobility found in the incantation texts. After all, his restraint was, in many cases, the work of a spirit."[445]

J. M. Kennedy suggests that Ezekiel was familiar with Mesopotamian rituals. According to Kennedy, the Hebrew expression פִּתָּחוֹן פֶּה ("opening of mouth") in Ezekiel 16:63 and 29:21 is best understood as a cognate of the Akkadian *pīt pî* and serves the same function as the Babylonian ritual known by the same name.[446] Thus, for Kennedy, the removal of the "opening of the mouth" in 16:63 foreshadows the removal of "the kind of idolatrous rites upon which verses 15–20 focus."[447] In contrast, the divine promise that YHWH will give Ezekiel an "opening of the mouth" in 29:21 (cf. 3:27) transforms the prophet into "a kind of living idol,"[448] functioning as the source of divine oracles. Significantly, Kennedy

442 Garfinkel, "Studies," 166. Y. Glazov also notes the ambiguity of Ezek 3:25: "…what are the 'cords' in v. 25 and who imposes them? If the verb *nāṯᵉnû* is passive, the 'actor' or 'binder' would seem to be Yhwh and the 'cords' would seem to be a metaphor (cf. 4.4–8), but if it is active, the 'binders' would seem to be the people and the 'cords' could be interpreted literally" (*The Bridling of the Tongue and the Opening of the Mouth in Biblical Prophecy* [JSOTSup 311; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001], 239).

443 Garfinkel, "Studies," 166–7.

444 This suggestion seems to me to be in broad agreement with the conclusions of Glazov's recent study of the Israelite prophetic call narratives. Glazov argues, however, that Ezekiel is dependent on traditions extant in Israelite literature, which are influenced to some degree by Egyptian ritual. For Glazov, it seems, Moses' call narrative is influenced by the Egyptian ritual while the consequent call narratives are dependent, primarily, on Moses' call. Nevertheless, he sees the probability that Ezekiel may be "punning" on the Babylonian mouth-opening rites in, e. g., Ezek 29:21 (*Bridling*, 274).

445 Garfinkel, "Studies," 167.

446 J. M. Kennedy, "Hebrew PITHÔN PEH in the Book of Ezekiel," *VT* 41:2 (1991), 233–35.

447 Kennedy, "PITHÔN PEH," 234. Significantly, vv. 17–20 describes the making, consecrating, and care of cultic images.

448 Kennedy, "PITHÔN PEH," 235.

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concludes that, "the book of Ezekiel…suggests that Yahweh works in and through human beings and not sculptured wood and stone."[449]

Likewise, C. A. Strine notes that there are some striking similarities between the locations of the theophanies, prophetic sign-acts, and oracles that occur in Ezekiel 1 – 11 and the use of space in the *mīs pî* ritual.[450] The book of Ezekiel opens with the prophet on the banks of the Chebar canal (1:1) and it is there that he receives his commission and his first vision of the divine. According to Strine, there are two important connections between Ezekiel 1:1 – 3:11 with the Mesopotamian cult induction ritual. First, there are notable similarities between the description of the divine statue in the incantation STT 200 and the theophanic description in Ezekiel 1:4 (cf. 1:27 – 8). Both describe the divine statue/vision in terms of radiance and splendor and share similar terminology (see, esp., חשמל // *elmešu*).[451] Second, Ezekiel's locale at the banks of the river Chebar corresponds to the initial procession in the cult statue induction, from the workshop to the river bank. In the first change of locale, Ezekiel is carried by the to רוח to Tel-abib (3:15), which translates literally into "mound of spring produce" indicating "a place of agricultural fertility" and, thus, is "a comparable locale to the orchard, the second station in the *mīs pî* ritual."[452] When the prophet changes locale again, he is commanded to go out to הבקעה ("valley/plain," 3:22). Following Block, Strine argues that the symbolic nature of this description is primary: it is "not so much a physical location as a cosmological space, a prototypical liminal locale."[453] In this way, Strine compares the location to the steppe in the cult ritual, which was a place where all the impurities of the statue could be left in an area isolated enough to cause no harm.[454] This parallel is strengthened by the command for the prophet to shut himself in his house (ביתך, v. 24). Strine proposes that the domestic interpretation of this command is perhaps incorrect. Instead, he suggests "the house correlates nicely with the reed huts…in which statues of Ea, Šamaš, and Marduk dwell during the ritual activities in the orchard."[455]

449 Kennedy, "PITHÔN PEH," 235. Glazov agrees with Kennedy, but sees the concept operating "at a secondary level" (*Bridling,* 268). He notes that Kennedy's interpretation "is not the primary sense demanded by the immediate narrative context," which appears to be more in line with "shaming" and "confounding" boastful speech (vv. 52 – 56). However, he suggests that, although Ezekiel intended to pun the Mesopotamian ritual, the original cultic background may have been forgotten and reinterpreted along different lines (*Bridling*, 264 – 5).

450 C. A. Strine, "The Mesopotamian Cult Statue Induction Ritual and the Imago Dei Anthropology in the Book of Ezekiel" (forthcoming). Strine follows Berlejung's detailed, eleven-stage scheme (*Theologie*; "Washing") and Schüle's condensed, four stage scheme ("Image of God") for the stages of the *mīs pî* ritual.

451 See below, n.456.

452 Strine, "Mesopotamian Cult Statue Induction," 9.

453 Strine, "Mesopotamian Cult Statue Induction," 9 – 10.

454 Strine, "Mesopotamian Cult Statue Induction," 4, 9 – 10; cf. Berlejung, "Washing," 54.

455 Strine, "Mesopotamian Cult Statue Induction," 10.

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Significantly, while in this house YHWH causes the prophet's tongue to cling to the roof of his mouth making him incapable of acting as an intercessor and declares that the prophet's mouth will be opened (אפתח את פיך, 3:25–7). Finally, the prophet's movement from his house in 8:1 to the gates of Jerusalem (8:3) and, then, to the entrance of the temple courtyard (8:14) corresponds to the final phase in the cult statue induction: the procession through the city and into the temple.

Other, more specific, Mesopotamian literary works have also been examined for their possible influence on the book. Bodi, for example, analyzes the proposed relationship of "expressions, themes and motifs" between Ezekiel and the Babylonian Poem of Erra, which has an extensive history as a resource in Ezekiel studies. His study analyzes twelve features shared by both works, organized in degrees of probability.[456] Bodi concludes that the relationship between Ezekiel and Erra is one of "literary emulation," which allows room for an artist or author "to adapt to a new context and apply in the best possible way an expression or a motif stemming from another composition."[457] At the same time, however, Bodi recognizes that Ezekiel may have been drawing on a wider pool of shared tradition:

> Our principal corpus of texts represents the Book of Ezekiel on the one hand and the Poem of Erra on the other. In our working hypothesis we assume that the possible point of entry of certain Akkadian themes and motifs into the Book of Ezekiel might be through the Poem of Erra. This assumption, however, does not preclude the examination of other works of Akkadian literature…[458]

Again, the idea that the Poem of Erra has influenced the book of Ezekiel is not new, and whether or not direct dependence between the book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra can be determined need not concern us here. Postgate's evaluation is apt:

> Whether one agrees with the author that the parallels adduced between the two works 'are sufficient to justify the claim' that 'the author or redactor of the Book of Ezekiel was acquainted with the Poem of Erra and used it as one of his sources' will be a matter of

456 In his first category, he investigates the relationship between features that appear uniquely in Ezekiel: 1) the Hebrew שׂאט and the Akk. *šētu/leqû šētūtu* "to show contempt/treat with despite"; 2) the Hebrew השמל etymologically related to Akk. *elmēšu*; 3) the motif of the seven executioners; and 4) the flood motif. The second category contains eight additional features that are familiar to both Ezekiel as well as other "Old Testament books" (Bodi, *Erra*, 24ff).

457 Bodi, *Erra*, 319.

458 Bodi, *Erra*, 27. See, also, J. Tigay's discussion on ancient canons of literary conventions that "drew extensively upon larger components, such as topoi, motifs, groups of lines, and episodes, which had their original settings in other compositions" (*The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic* [Philadelphia: UPenn, 1982], 162). In this light, according to Bodi, the book of Ezekiel is merely following ancient Near Eastern "canons of literary style which placed a premium on saying things in conventional ways" (*Erra*, 319).

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> personal judgment… Undoubtedly, the two works share common themes, and one must agree that this is not pure coincidence; a Babylonian background for the book of Ezekiel is evident.[459]

Bodi's investigation brings to the surface the central nature of the divine abandonment motif in the book of Ezekiel. Although Bodi's primary point of comparison is with the Poem of Erra, he notes that Ezekiel shares a number of features of this motif with many other Mesopotamian texts. Thus, for instance, Bodi notes that in many of the Mesopotamian texts "the divinity leaves its shrine because of moral, social, cultic and political offenses."[460] These reasons are comparable to YHWH's departure in Ezekiel (e. g., 9:3; 10:4; 11:22), which is purportedly caused by "cultic abominations and irregularities committed in the Jerusalem temple" (e. g., 8:1 – 16) and "moral and social evils" (e. g., 9:9; 11:2, 6).[461] D. Block has likewise observed that in this motif Ezekiel shares a number of features with Mesopotamian literary tradition.[462] Specifically, he notes 1) human provocation as the cause; 2) divine anger as the motivation; 3) disaster as the effect; and 4) the deity's ultimate return to the city, which is accompanied by the selection of a new ruler and ultimate peace and prosperity.[463]

Moreover, according to Bodi, both the Poem of Erra and the Book of Ezekiel use the deity's departure and return as a central structuring device:

> The Poem of Erra depicts Marduk's departure and return to his city and temple. Erra cannot execute his plans as long as Marduk is in his temple in Babylon. Once Marduk has vacated his statue Erra can start with the whirlwind of war and destruction which dominates much of the Poem. At the end of the Poem, Erra, appeased, orders Išum to bring the gods back to their shrines. This movement of departure from and return of Marduk and the gods resembles Yahweh's departure from and return back to the Jerusalem temple. Yahweh's glory leaves the temple in Ezek 9 and returns to dwell in the new temple toward the end of the Book of Ezekiel. Indeed, this parallel reveals a striking similarity of conception and composition of both the Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra. This is a point of similarity in the overall structure of both works.[464]

459 J. N. Postgate, "Review of D. Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*," *VT* 43:1 (1993), 137.

460 Bodi, *Erra*, 215.

461 Bodi, *Erra*, 215.

462 D. Block, "Divine Abandonment: Ezekiel's Adaptation of an Ancient Near Eastern Motif," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theology and Anthropology Perspectives* (ed. M. S. Odell and J. T. Strong; SBLSymS 9; Atlanta: Scholars, 2000), 15 – 42. Block's study takes into account a vast range of Mesopotamian material, ranging from the c. 2100 BCE Sumerian *Curse of Agade* to the sixth century BCE *Cyrus Cylinder.*

463 Block, "Abandonment," 32 – 33.

464 Bodi, *Erra*, 217 – 218; Block, likewise, describes the "'travels' of the glory of Yahweh" as central to the book of Ezekiel, pointing to the fact that the book opens with "one of the fundamental motifs in [Ezekiel's] prophetic proclamation: the movements of the glory of Yahweh" (1:1 – 28). These movements, according to Block, show up twice more: "Fourteen

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Finally, Bodi notes that the theme of divine departure is most often present in "city laments and *post eventum* descriptions of looting of temples and shrines." He thus reasonably suggests that YHWH's departure from the Jerusalem temple likewise might be "composed with reference to an ancient Mesopotamian literary tradition reflected in the Poem of Erra and in the light of the circumstances which prevailed after the looting and desecration of the Jerusalem temple."[465]

Similarly, J. Kutsko's *Between Heaven and Earth* is a detailed investigation of the motifs of divine presence and absence in the book of Ezekiel as seen "in the context of Israelite and, more broadly, Near Eastern theology."[466] Kutsko, like Bodi, recognizes the centrality of the divine presence and absence in Ezekiel:

> Following the throne vision in chap. 1 and the indictment of Israel in chaps. 6 – 9, the divine presence of God in the Temple mounts its cherubim throne and leaves the Jerusalem Temple (11:22 – 25): from divine presence to divine absence. The book concludes with the return of the *kābôd* to the restored sanctuary (43:1 – 9): from divine absence to divine presence.[467]

Moreover, Kutsko goes to great lengths to place this central emphasis in its historical context: the exile in Babylon. The exile raised the question of God's presence and absence ("Where is God in exile?"). Despite the absence of an Israelite temple in Babylon, Ezekiel insists that God is nevertheless present: "in Babylonia – a foreign land – the prophet receives his call, and there Yahweh himself becomes their 'little sanctuary' (לְמִקְדָּשׁ מְעָט)."[468] Further, Ezekiel faced the dilemma of portraying YHWH as present, without a temple, in a land where idols physically represented the gods. Yet, according to Kutsko, Ezekiel's aniconism would not allow him to take the latter option. Instead, Ezekiel presents YHWH as "absent in physical representation…[but]…present in his actions, while cult statues – idols – are physically present but are powerless."[469] Kutsko's thesis is

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months after the inaugural vision Ezekiel observes in visionary form the glory of Yahweh move by stages out of the temple and then disappear over the horizon east of Jerusalem (8:1 – 11:25). Almost two decades later the vision returns. After being taken on a tour of the temple, Ezekiel sees the *kābôd* of Yahweh returning from the east, passing through the east gate, and entering the temple (Ezek 40 – 43)" ("Abandonment," 15).

465 Bodi, *Erra*, 218; cf. Block, likewise, states that such similarities should not be surprising since "[Ezekiel] lived in Babylon, where he was surrounded by images of deities and where stories of divine abandonment flourished" ("Abandonment," 35).

466 Kutsko, *Between*, 150.

467 Kutsko, *Between*, 2.

468 Kutsko, *Between*, 2.

469 Kutsko, *Between*, 2. As will become clear, Kutsko's study is very important for this thesis. I am very skeptical, however, of many of Kutsko's assumptions regarding Ezekiel's knowledge of P, the function of the concept in Ezekiel, and, most significantly, with his contention regarding the dichotomy between YHWH's "absence in physical representation" and "presence in his actions." Rather, it will be argued, YHWH's people will become the means by which his presence is physically enacted.

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therefore a study of divine presence and absence in all its permutations, not simply the divine absence from the central temple.

4.3.2 Israel as YHWH's Image in Ezekiel

In *Between Heaven and Earth*, Kutsko argues that Ezekiel was familiar with the Priestly concept that humans are the image of God. However, in contrast to the Priestly writer, the prophet refrained from using the exact terminology due to Ezekiel's unique context and emphasis. According to Kutsko, the difference between Genesis 1 and Ezekiel is that the former does not occur in a context that could be construed as an idol polemic. Rather, Genesis 1 emphasizes God's role as sole creator: "In this context God is sole creator, and man is the sole image of God."[470] By contrast,

> Ezekiel was concerned fundamentally with the implications that *ṣelem* suggested, for the prophet also was aware of the Mesopotamian ideology of cult statue as *ṣalam ili/ilāni*. For Ezekiel, the use of *ṣelem* would have been utterly inappropriate, since he was concerned above all with giving no credence to idols.[471]

In other words, Ezekiel's familiarity with the Priestly concept is only implicit since the prophet refused to use צלם to describe the physical appearance of God in passages such as Ezekiel 1:26 – 28 (cf. 8:2):

> ועל דמות הכסא דמות כמראה אדם...הוא מראה דמות כבוד־יהוה

> Above the form (דמות) of the throne was a form (דמות) like the semblance (מראה) of a human...It was the semblance (מראה) of the form (דמות) of the glory (כבוד) of YHWH.

As many have noticed, Ezekiel's description of the divine כבוד corresponds to the Priestly description of humanity as צלם אלהים, since both passages describe the physical appearance of God vis-à-vis humanity and both make use of like terminology, e. g., דמות. Further, both passages are fundamentally dealing with a similar issue: how to describe the physical representation of YHWH in an overtly iconic, cultic context. Significantly, the answers are similar: "man is like God, and God is like man."[472] As Smith notes, "[w]hereas Ezekiel 1:26 conveys the prophet's vision of Yahweh in the likeness of the human person, Genesis 1 presents a vision of the human person in the likeness of the Divine."[473] According

470 Kutsko, *Between*, 67.
471 Kutsko, *Between*, 67.
472 Kutsko, *Between*, 68.
473 Smith, *Origins*, 90; cf. *idem*, "Divine Form and Size in Ugaritic and Preexilic Israelite Religion," *ZAW* 100 (1988), 427.

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to Kutsko, the absence of certain terminology should not be construed as the prophet's ignorance of the Priestly conceptualization of humanity. Instead, given Ezekiel's polemical purposes, it makes more sense to conclude that Ezekiel intentionally replaced צלם with מראה.[474]

Kutsko does present a convincing argument that the term מראה, often held to denote only "approximate similarity" and, thus, used by Ezekiel to describe the physical appearance of YHWH in a cautious and ambiguous way, is used elsewhere to indicate "quite concrete objects."[475] It is therefore possible that Ezekiel, wanting to avoid giving any credence to the Mesopotamian conceptualization of cultic images, chose to refrain from using certain terminology. Ezekiel's refusal to use אלהים to describe idols is a case in point.[476] Further, in contrast to the Priestly usage, Ezekiel employs צלם solely to denote illegitimate images (7:20; 16:17; 23:14).[477] However, Kutsko's argument that the Priestly expression was available to Ezekiel but that the prophet demurred from explicitly echoing the concept due to polemical reasons, while possible, is not as convincing.[478] Kutsko under-emphasizes the polemical context of Genesis 1 that elevates humanity into a role otherwise occupied by cultic images.[479] Moreover, it is equally plausible that Ezekiel laid the groundwork for the more explicit expression found in the Priestly tradition.[480] Nevertheless, whether Ezekiel is dependent upon P, P on Ezekiel, or both are interacting with similar traditions[481] and engaging in similar

474 Kutsko, *Between*, 66 – 67

475 See above, n.137.

476 See below.

477 The only Priestly text to associate צלם with illegitimate images is Num 33:52. See above, n.200.

478 If anything, given the prophet's refusal to use אל or אלהים in reference to cultic images, the use of צלם אלהים to refer exclusively to humanity would have been a very effective polemical device (much as it is in Gen 1). Another line of evidence that Kutsko submits for Ezekiel's familiarity with the Priestly material is found in Ezek 33:25, which prohibits the consumption of blood, idolatry, and murder. Kutsko argues that this comprises an "exact reflection of the Priestly tradition" as found in Gen 9:4 – 6, which also juxtaposes the prohibitions on consuming blood and murder but grounds the latter in the principle that humans are the image of God. As Strine points out, however, the route Kutsko takes to make this link is quite circuitous, ultimately relying on a summary of blood prohibitions from Milgrom's commentary on Lev 16 and appeals to the Deuteronomistic 2 Kgs 21. Kutsko, himself is aware of the tenuous nature of his argument as he adds that it is only a "possibility" and "lacks direct proof" (*Between*, 138).

479 See above, chap. 4.1.

480 See, e. g., von Rad, *Old Testament Theology 1*, 146; Humbert, *Études*, 172.

481 See, however, D. Petersen's convincing argument that Ezekiel and P do *not* share a similar view of creation. The book of Ezekiel has a more pessimistic view on the original creation. Thus, vocabulary, images, and concepts of creation in Ezekiel are often found in the context of judgment: "It is, therefore, no accident that Ezekiel shares the diction of several verses in Gen 2 – 3, since this is a story in which the utterly human character of the Earth-creature is underscored" ("Creation and Hierarchy in Ezekiel: Methodological Perspectives and

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questions, there are very good reasons to believe that in Ezekiel one finds a similar conceptualization that humanity could serve as the image of YHWH.

4.3.2.1 Images of Idolatry in Ezekiel

More than any other book or corpus in the Hebrew Bible, Ezekiel focuses on idolatry as the chief sin of Israel and, thus, the ultimate reason for the exile.[482] Kutsko details the narrowing emphasis on idolatry through the first eight chapters of Ezekiel: A general indictment of "rebellion" (e. g., מרד and מרי) opens the book (chaps. 2 – 3), but is soon narrowed in chapter 5:6 – 11, where YHWH rails against the "abominations" (תועבות) and "detestable things" (שקוצים) with which Israel has defiled the temple and for which YHWH threatens to abandon his people. Chapter 6, then, expands on these charges to include worship of idols (גלולים) on "high places" (במות), hills (גבעה רמה /גבעות), mountains (ראשי ההרים /הרים), and under trees (אלה עבתה /עץ רענן). The punishment for such practices will be total destruction: cities, "high places," altars, idols, and idolators will all be destroyed (vv. 13 – 14). The high point of the opening indictment is found in chapter 8, where the prophet is transported in a vision to the temple. In this vision the prophet is shown a number of "evil abominations" (התועבות הרעות), including "an image of jealousy" (סמל הקנאה, vv. 3, 5), idolatrous representations of all kinds (vv. 10 – 12), women weeping for the god Tammuz (v. 14), and men worshipping the sun (v. 16). The chapter proceeds in steps. After each scene of idolatry, YHWH tells the prophet that "great abominations" (תועבות גדלות) wait to be seen (e. g., vv. 6, 13, 15; cf. v. 9). The chapter, then, concludes with a question (v. 17):

הנקל לבית יהודה מעשות את־התועבות אשר עשו־פה

> Is it a trivial matter that the house of Judah commits the abominations that they have done here?

The answer, of course, is "No." The movement from indictment to punishment is swift: "The inescapable punishment draws near (chap. 9), as does the departure of the presence of Yahweh (10:1 – 22; 11:22 – 25)."[483]

Of more interest, however, is the detailed treatment cultic images receive in certain passages, in which Ezekiel demonstrates familiarity with the con-

Theological Prospects," in S. Cook and C. Patton [eds.], *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World: Wrestling with a Tiered Reality* [Leiden: Brill, 2004], 175).

482 That the central issue in Ezekiel is the destruction of the temple in 587 BCE and the Babylonian Exile is well recognized (see, e. g., Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 352 – 53).

483 Kutsko, *Between*, 26.

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struction, maintenance, and conceptualization of Mesopotamian cult images. One of the most explicit is found in chapter 16 (vv. 17 – 19).

ותקחי כלי תפארתך מזהבי ומכספי אשר נתתי לך ותעשי־לך צלמי זכר ותזני־בם :
ותקחי את־בגדי רקמתך ותכסים ושמני וקטרתי נתתי לפניהם : ולחמי אשר־נתתי לך
סלת ושמן ודבש האכלתיך ונתתיהו לפניהם לריח ניחח

You took your fine jewelry from my gold and my silver, which I had given to you, and you made for yourself male images and, with them, you whored yourself. You took your embroidered clothing and clothed them. My oil and my incense you set before them. Moreover, my bread that I gave you – flour, oil, and honey, which I fed you – you set before them as a pleasing aroma.

Of particular interest in this passage is that YHWH had first given these gifts to Israel (vv. 10 – 13):

ואלבישך רקמה ואנעלך תחש ואחבשך בשש ואכסך משי : ואעדך עדי ואתנה צמידים
על־ידיך וריביד על־גרונך : ואתן נזם על־אפך ועגילים על־אזניך ועטרת תפארת
בראשך : ותעדי זהב וכסף ומלבושך שש ומשי ורקמה סלת ודבש ושמן אכלת

I dressed you with embroidered clothing and put leather sandals on your feet. I wrapped you in linen and covered you in silk. I adorned you with ornaments and I put bracelets upon your wrists and a necklace around your neck. I put a ring in your nose and earrings in your ears. I put a beautiful crown on your head. You were thus adorned with gold and silver and your clothes were linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate flour, honey, and oil.

According to Kutsko, these verses demonstrate that Ezekiel was aware of the Priestly concept of humans created as צלם אלהים: "Yahweh clothes and cares for his people, who are the image of God (vv. 10 – 13a). Israel, however, has gone after other gods, constructing them from materials (vv. 16 – 17) and forming them into mere 'images of men' ותעשי־לך צלמי זכר (v. 17)."[484] Again, it is difficult to agree with Kutsko that the concept behind this analogy is *the* Priestly concept from Genesis 1:26 – 28, since the emphasis on creation is not obvious[485] and there is no verbal correspondence. Nevertheless, it would be completely wrong to dismiss the presence of a cultic image analogy as well. The argument, it seems, is that Israel has usurped the role of YHWH and is erroneously treating her images in the same manner that YHWH has appropriately treated her.

Certainly, no one would mistake Ezekiel's tirades against idolatry for the sustained parodies in, for example, Isaiah 44 and Jeremiah 10. Nevertheless,

484 Kutsko, *Between*, 30.

485 See, however, vv. 3 – 4, which describes Jerusalem's "origin" (מכורה) and "birth" (ילד). But even here the emphasis appears to be on ethnic descent in order to suggest a predisposition to idolatry.

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many of the same emphases can be found in Ezekiel's polemics. Like the deuteronomistic and prophetic idol polemics, Ezekiel also emphasizes the human craftsmanship and care of cultic images. The images are linked to material construction, as well as being dependent on the care of humans (i. e. clothing and feeding). This connection between the icon and the profane is, on at least one occasion, used to indicate the general powerlessness of the image (7:19 – 20).

The ridicule and mockery of cultic images is, however, most clearly felt in Ezekiel's choice of terminology. Indeed, one of the most drastic differences between Ezekiel's and other prophetic polemics is the prophet's refusal to call cultic images "god" (אלהים/אל). As we have seen, the strategy of the parodies is expressly to identify the deity with the profane material from which the statue was made. This is, then, often accomplished by juxtaposing terminology. Isaiah 44:9 – 10, for example, states:

יצרי־פסל כלם תהו וחמודיהם בל־יועילו ועדיהם המה בל־יראו ובל־ידעו למען
יבשו : מי־יצר אל ופסל נסך לבלתי הועיל :

> All who make an idol (יצרי־פסל) are nothing, and the things they delight in profit nothing; their witnesses do not see and do not know, so that they will be put to shame. Who would fashion a god (יצר אל) or cast an image (פסל) that cannot bring profit?

In these verses, the one "who fashions an idol" is paralleled with the one "who fashions a god," thus explicitly identifying the image (פסל) and the god (אל). Ezekiel does not do this. Rather, on those occasions where one might expect אל or אלהים, Ezekiel uses "less ambiguous" terminology, such as, גלולים, תועבות, and שקוצים.[486]

שקוצים occurs eight times in the book of Ezekiel and, apart from 20:30, always in combination with תועבות or גלולים. Of these occurrences, over half refer explicitly to idolatry (5:11; 7:20; 20:7, 8; 37:53).[487] Although תועבה is found around 117 times in the Hebrew Bible, it is most abundant in Ezekiel (43 times).[488] In both the singular and the plural forms, the noun is often used ambiguously to refer, comprehensively, to all aspects of cultic impurity,[489] which includes idolatry (e. g., Ezek 18:20; 22:2; 23:36; 33:26; cf. 44:6 – 7, 13).[490] More abrupt,

486 See Kutsko, *Between*, 28 – 42, esp. pp. 29, 36. Less often occurring terms in Ezekiel include: צלם (7:20; 16:17; 23:14), תרפים (21:26), and אלילים (30:13).

487 This is likewise the case for all the occurrences of the noun in the Hebrew Bible. Of the 28 occurrences, over half refer to idols (Kutsko, *Between*, 29, 36; cf. D.N. Freedman and A.J. Welch, "שִׁקּוּץ," *TDOT* 15:465 – 9; Levtow, *Images*, 155 – 6).

488 Other than in Ezekiel, the noun occurs most often in Deuteronomistic texts (22 times) and Jeremiah (8 times).

489 Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 190; cf. Kutsko, *Between*, 30; H.-D. Preuss, "תּוֹעֵבָה," *TDOT* 15:591 – 603; LaRocca-Pitts, *"Of Wood"*, 113 f.

490 Kutsko, *Between*, 29, 36; LaRocca-Pitts, *"Of Wood and Stone,"* 113 and n.71.

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however, is Ezekiel's favorite term for idols, גלולים. The term is used in the Hebrew Bible 48 times, with 39 of those occurrences in Ezekiel. The other nine occurrences are all in what are generally considered exilic or post-exilic texts.[491] Some therefore suggest that Ezekiel's use of the term influenced the later occurrences.[492]

Two suggestions have been offered for the derivation of גלולים. First is the suggestion that it is derived from גלל, "to roll,"[493] with an attested nominal form גַּל, "heap of stones."[494] In this way, the selected terminology may reflect the characteristic roundness of stones and boulders, particularly, sacred standing stones.[495] A second suggestion is that the term is derived from גלל, "to be dirty," with a nominal form גֶּלֶל, "dung."[496] Block argues, however, that both ideas may indeed be in view:

> The word appears to be an artificial construct derived from the verb *gālal*, 'to roll'…The adoption of this word as a designation for idols may have been prompted by the natural pelletlike shape and size of sheep feces or, less likely, the cylindrical shape of human excrement.[497]

Kutsko correctly ascertains the one-word-polemic's effect:

> Certainly, the basic meaning of idols as (merely) a stone – a neutral description with perhaps a suggestion of their efficacy – may lie behind the term *gillûlîm*, but Ezekiel intended the derived meaning to resonate with his audience. In other words, he exploited the dual association of (idol) stone and excrement in order to imply that pagan idols are, in Wolff's words, "Scheissgötter."[498]

Far from being too serious for mockery,[499] Ezekiel presents here a "caustic comment"[500] on images.[501]

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491 Lev 26:30; Deut 29:16; 1 Kings 15:12; 21:26; 2 Kings 17:12; 21:11, 21; 23:24; Jer 50:2.

492 D. Bodi, "Les *gillûlîm* chez Ézéchiel et dans l'Ancien Testament, et les différentes pratiques cultuelles associées a ce terme," *RB* 100 (1993), 482. However, as Kutsko notes, "there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that Ezekiel invented the term, only that it was his term of choice to denote idols and idolatry" (*Between*, 32).

493 Most agree that גלולים is vocalized after the pattern of שקוצים ("detestable things").

494 See, e. g., Gen 31:46, 48, 51 – 52; Josh 7:26; 8:29; 2 Sam 18:17; 2 Kgs 19:25; Isa 25:2; 37:26; Jer 9:10; 51:37; Hos 12:12; Job 8:17; 15:28.

495 Block states, however, that the name "has nothing to do with the shape of idols, but expresses Ezekiel's/Yahweh's disposition toward them" (*Ezekiel 1 – 24,* 226).

496 See, e. g., 1 Kings 14:10; Zeph 1:17 (pl). Note also גללי האדם in Ezek 4:12, 15.

497 Block, *Ezekiel 1 – 24*, 226; cf. Bodi, "Les *gillûlîm*," 510; Kutsko, *Between*, 34.

498 Kutsko, *Between*, 34; cf. H. W. Wolff, "Jahwe und die Götter in der alttestamentlichen Prophetie," *EvT* 29 (1969), 407. Block concurs, suggesting that "[m]odern sensitivities prevent translators from rendering this expression as Ezekiel intended for it to be heard, but had he been preaching today, he probably would have identified these idols with a four-letter word for excrement" (*Ezekiel 1 – 24*, 226).

499 J. Hadley remarks that Ezekiel's preference for this term over, e. g., פסל, points to a di-

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Despite the fact that Ezekiel's polemical efforts are less focused and sustained than those of the parodies, one wonders if the effect would have been much different. Although Ezekiel does not directly identify the deity with the profane material, since that for him would concede too much,[502] he does identify the image with its construction and with cultic impurities. In fact, one could argue that Ezekiel's strategy to avoid any possible confusion regarding the nature of the cultic image is, if anything, stronger. Ezekiel's description of cultic images as גלולים or, better, עלמי תועבת must have been striking given the prophet's Babylonian context. Cultic images are not images of a god or goddess. They are earthly products, produced by humans. As such, they are not worthy of worship. In fact, they are abominations and thus no better than excrement.

Another strategy found most prominently in the biblical idol polemics is also found in Ezekiel. One of the primary purposes behind the idol polemics in the Hebrew Bible was to deny the perceived efficacy of such rituals like the Mesopotamian *mīs pî* and *pīt pî*. As we have seen, the explicit identification of the deity with the human origin and profane materials of the image itself is how this was primarily achieved: the cultic image, made by craftsmen, is merely "silver and gold" or "wood and stone." These descriptions function then as the grounds for certain conclusions that automatically disqualify the effectiveness of the ritual. Rather than becoming the god or goddess, the images cannot even do what humans can. Despite what might be believed, they cannot walk, cannot communicate, and do not have sensory perceptions (seeing, hearing, etc.). In other words, they are not alive. Rather, they are just dead, inanimate objects.

As we have seen, this sentiment is expressed clearly in Jeremiah 10:1 – 16, where YHWH is shown to be more powerful than the deities of Mesopotamia, identified with their cultic images. Since an idol is the product of human craftsmanship and profane materials, they are liable to "topple over" (v 4), "they cannot speak," "cannot walk," and can do neither "evil" nor "good" (v 5), "they

stinction between Ezekiel and the idol parodies: "while for the satirists the worship of idols is silly, for Ezekiel it is a *sin* (and filthy)" ("גלולים," *NIDOTTE* 1:865).

500 Block, *Ezekiel 1 – 24*, 226.

501 "On one level, the term *gillûlîm* is a description of pagan gods as merely coarse objects. On another level, the word implies scorching mockery. We should not overestimate the force of the latter connotation (namely, a meaning associated with dung), since the former connotation (that is, a heap of stones) is a very significant polemic in itself" (Kutsko, *Between*, 34).

502 However, note the similar strategy of Ezekiel's description of images in 16:17 (צלמי זכר) and 23:14 – 15 (צלמי כשדים...דמות בני־בבל) with Isa 44:13: ויעשׂהו כתבנית איש כתפארת אדם ("And he makes [the image] like the form of a man, like the beauty of a human"). The polemical strategy is to identify cultic images as only "images of humans" and, thus, "hardly divine" (Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 30 n54). Note also Wis 13:14, which mocks the zoomorphic form of the cultic images (cf. M. Gilbert, *La critique des dieux dans le Livre de la Sagesse [Sg 13 – 15]* [AB 53; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1973], 84 – 88).

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are stupid and foolish," since "they are only wood" (v 8); "there is no breath/spirit in them" (v 14), and, therefore, "they are worthless; a work of delusion" (v 15).

Habakkuk 2:18 – 19 compares YHWH and cultic images on similar grounds:

מה־הועיל פסל כי פסלו יצרו מסכה ומורה שקר כי בטח יצר יצרו עליו לעשות
אלילים אלמים : הוי אמר לעץ הקיצה עורי לאבן דומם הוא יורה הנה־הוא תפוש
זהב וכסף וכל־רוח אין בקרבו : ויהוה בהיכל קדשו הס מפניו כל־הארץ :

Of what profit is an idol? For its sculptor shapes it, a metal-covered image and a teacher of falsehood; for the shaper trusts in its shape, to make mute idols. Woe to the one who says to wood, "Wake up!" To a mute stone, "Get up!" Will it instruct? Look, it is plated with gold and silver, there is no breath in it at all. But YHWH is in his holy temple. Be silent before him, all the earth![503]

The powerlessness of cultic images is, in other texts, also applied to those who worship them. In other words, an analogous relationship is drawn between idolators and their idols. The analogy is usually predicated on a retributive principle, an eye for an eye, so that worshippers of illicit images share the same characteristics and fate as the images being worshipped. That Israelite authors condemn idolators and idols to a shared fate is certainly not all that surprising, since the judgment for idolatry is often stated in comprehensive terms. Not only will the images be destroyed, so also will all those worshipping them. A handful of passages, however, make this claim explicitly. Most famously, Isaiah 6 describes the fate of idolatrous Israel in terms of the destruction of cultic trees and stones (vv. 12 – 13):

ורחק יהוה את־האדם ורבה העזובה בקרב הארץ : ועוד בה עשריה ושבה והיתה לבער
כאלה וכאלון אשר בשלכת מצבת בם זרע קדש מצבתה :

YHWH has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. Though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again[504] as the terebinth (אלה) or the oak (אלון), which is cast down as a pillar among them (מצבת בם)[505]; the holy seed is its pillar (מצבת).[506]

503 Hab 2:18 – 19, perhaps, reflects the latest stage of the prophetic parodies (see, e. g., Levtow, *Images*, 77), but the date for the composition of the oracles in Hab is widely disputed, ranging anywhere from the seventh to the second century BCE (see, esp., F. I. Anderson, *Habakkuk* [New York: Doubleday, 2001], 24 – 7). What was said earlier of Jer 10 is equally appropriate here: "It is thus impossible to date with any certainty the present form of the passage, it could be either late pre-exilic, exilic, or post-exilic" (see above, chap. 3 n.147).

504 Or "it will return and will be burned" (see, e. g., KJV).

505 1QIsa reads here מצבת במה, which some interpreters believe should be translated "as a pillar of a high place" (see, e. g., F. Hvidberg, "The Masseba and the Holy Seed," in *Interpretationes ad Vetus Testamentum pertinentes Sigmundo Mowinckel septuagenerio missae* [ed. A. S. Kapelrud; NTT 56; Oslo: Land og kirche, 1955], 97 – 9; W. Albright, "The High

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The translation of אלה, אלון, and מצבת as cultic paraphernalia is persuasively argued by, most recently, G. Beale.[507] Important for this interpretation is the recognition that Isaiah 6 merely develops an earlier prediction that idolatrous Israel will be burned like her idolatrous trees.[508] Thus, 1:29 – 31 reads,

כי יבשו מאילים אשר חמדתם ותחפרו מהגנות אשר בחרתם : כי תהיו כאלה נבלת עלה
וכגנה אשר־מים אין לה : והיה החסן לנערת ופעלו לניצוץ ובערו שניהם יחדו ואין מכבה :

> For they shall be ashamed of the oaks that you desired, and you shall be embarrassed by the gardens that you have chosen. For you shall be like a terebinth whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water. The strong will become tinder, and his work a spark. Both of them shall burn together and there will be none to quench them.[509]

The reciprocal principle that idolators will suffer a similar fate as their idols is also found in Ezekiel 6:4 – 6, which reads,

ונשמו מזבחותיכם ונשברו חמניכם והפלתי חלליכם לפני גלוליכם : ונחתי את־פגרי
בני ישראל לפני גלוליהם וזריתי את־עצמותיכם סביבות מזבחותיכם : בכל מושבותיכם
הערים תחרבנה והבמות תישמנה למען יחרבו ויאשמו מזבחותיכם ונשברו ונשבתו
גלוליכם וננדעו חמניכם ונמחו מעשיכם :

Place in Ancient Palestine," in *Volume du Congrès: Strasbourg 1956* (VTSup 4; Leiden: Brill, 1957), 254 – 7; G. R. Driver, "Isaiah I – XXXIX: Textual and Linguistic Problems," *JSS* 13 [1968], 38).

506 Although the description of a remnant as a "holy seed" retains a "strictly positive connotation," the point is that it has become (or is in danger of becoming) indistinguishable from the larger, idolatrous, portion (G. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* [Downers Grove: IVP, 2008], 59 – 63; cf. S. Blank, "Traces of Prophetic Agony in Isaiah," *HUCA* 27 [1956], 86 – 91; F. Key, "The Magical Background of Isaiah 6:9 – 13," *JBL* 86 [1967], 198 – 204). A similar connotation is likewise found in the phrase זרע הקדש in Ezra 9:1 – 2, where the returning "Israelites, priests, and Levites" had not "separated themselves from the peoples of the lands." On the relationship between Isa 6 and Ezra 9, see H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (Word: Waco, 1985), 132.

507 Beale, *Become*, 51 – 64; cf. Beale's earlier article, "Isaiah VI 9 – 13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry," *VT* 41:3 (1991), 257 – 78. Beale notes that these terms overwhelmingly refer to cultic paraphernalia and/or occur in cultic contexts: אלה (Gen 35:4; Josh 24:26; Judg 6:11, 19; Isa 1:30; 6:13; Ezek 6:13; Hos 4:13; cf. 1 Kgs 13:14) and אלון (Gen 12:6; 13:18; 14:13; 18:1; Judg 9:6, 37; 1 Sam 10:3). In contrast to the traditional interpretation of מצבת/מצבה, in this context, as "stump" or "wood substance," the term elsewhere only refers to a cultic pillar of some sort (see above, chap. 3.2.2). Further, the Hebrew term more often reserved for a tree stump (גזע) does occur in Isa 11:1.

508 As Beale notes, the conclusions drawn from the relationship between Isa 1 and 6 do not necessarily depend on the direction of development (*Become*, 53 n.23).

509 Cf. Isa 17:8 – 11 and 27:9 – 11, where a similar strategy seems to be in place. There, the worship of, among other things, אשרים becomes the basis for bringing famine and rendering the dwelling places of Israel deserted. There may also be some lexical connections between these passages and 6:13 (Beale, *Become*, 61 n.46).

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> Your altars will become desolate, and your incense stands will be broken, and I will throw down your slain in front of your idols. I will lay the corpses of the people of Israel before your idols; I will scatter your bones around your altars. In all your places of habitation, the cities will be ruined and your high places desolate, so that your altars will be ruined and desolate, your idols will be broken and destroyed, your incense stands overturned, and your works wiped out.

Just as the idols themselves will be broken down and destroyed, so also will the idolators be killed, their bodies placed before their idols, and their bones scattered around the altars.[510]

More interesting, by far, is the description of idolators taking on the characteristics of the focus of their worship. This is seen most clearly in the postexilic Psalms 115 and 135. Thus, Psalm 115:4–8 reads,

> עצביהם כסף וזהב מעשׂה ידי אדם׃ פה־להם ולא ידברו עינים להם ולא יראו׃
> אזנים להם ולא ישׁמעו אף להם ולא יריחון׃ ידיהם ולא ימישׁון רגליהם ולא יהלכו
> לא־יהגו בגרונם׃ כמוהם יהיו עשׂיהם כל אשׁר־בטח בהם׃

> Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but they cannot speak. They have eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear. They have noses, but cannot smell. They have hands, but they cannot feel. They have feet, but they cannot walk. They cannot utter a sound in their throat. Those who make them will become like them, so also everyone who trusts in them.

Similarly, Psalm 135:15–18 reads,

> עצבי הגוים כסף וזהב מעשׂה ידי אדם׃ פה־להם ולא ידברו עינים להם ולא יראו׃
> אזנים להם ולא יאזינו אף אין־ישׁ־רוח בפיהם׃ כמוהם יהיו עשׂיהם כל אשׁר־בטח בהם׃

> The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak. They have eyes, but cannot see. They have ears, but cannot hear, nor is there breath in their mouth. Those who make them will become like them, so also all who trust in them.

The consequence of worshipping a cultic image, in these texts, is that the worshipper will become like it: dumb, blind, deaf, and without breath. Beale argues that Isaiah 6:9–10, based on his cultic reading of vv. 11–13, should likewise be read in the light of such taunts.

> ויאמר לך ואמרת לעם הזה שׁמעו שׁמוע ואל־תבינו וראו ראו ואל־תדעו׃ השׁמן לב־העם
> הזה ואזניו הכבד ועיניו השׁע פן־יראה בעיניו ובאזניו ישׁמע ולבבו יבין ושׁב ורפא לו׃

510 Kutsko, *Between*, 134–5. See, also, v. 13: וידעתם כי אני יהוה בהיות חלליהם בתוך גלוליהם סביבות מזבחותיהם ("You will know that I am YHWH when their slain lie among their idols around their altars"; cf. Lev 26:30).

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> He said, "Go, and say to this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and their eyes blind; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

Interestingly, the same terminology is applied to humans somewhat frequently in the Hebrew Bible[511] and is often applied to those accused of idolatry.[512] Indeed, this motif has been called "thematic" in the book of Isaiah.[513] Evans, for example, sees a reflection of 6:9 – 10 in the idol parodies of Second Isaiah. Isaiah 42:17 – 20 states,

> נסגו אחור יבשו בשת הבטחים בפסל האמרים למסכה אתם אלהינו : החרשים שמעו
> והעורים הביטו לראות : מי עור כי אם־עבדי וחרש כמלאכי אשלח מי עור כמשלם
> ועור כעבד יהוה : ראות רבות ולא תשמר פקוח אזנים ולא ישמע :

> They will be turned back and utterly shamed, who trust in idols, who say to metal-plated images, "You are our gods." Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see! Who is blind but my servant and deaf like my messenger whom I send? Who is blind like my dedicated one or blind like the servant of YHWH? Seeing many things, but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear.

Likewise, many see an allusion to Isaiah 6 in Jeremiah 5:21, which reads:

> שמע־נא זאת עם סכל ואין לב עינים להם ולא יראו אזנים להם ולא ישמעו

> Hear this, O foolish and senseless [אין לב] people: You have eyes but cannot see; you have ears but cannot hear.

The larger context of Jeremiah 5 places this oracle in an idol polemic (vv. 7, 19). The same language is also found in Ezekiel 12:2, which reads:

> בן־אדם בתוך בית־המרי אתה ישב אשר עינים להם לראות ולא ראו אזנים להם לשמע ולא
> שמעו כי בית מרי הם

511 On the "obduracy" motif in the Hebrew Bible, see, e. g., F. Hesse *Das Verstockungsproblem im Alten Testament* (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1955); C. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9 – 10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989); E. Meadors, *Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart: A Study in Biblical Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006); Beale, *Become*; T. Uhlig, *The Theme of Hardening in the Book of Isaiah: An Analysis of Communicative Action* (FAT II 39; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

512 See Beale, *Become*, 36 – 126; Meadors, *Idolatry*, 56 – 68. Although using similar terminology, some passages are less obviously set in the context of idolatry (e. g., Isa 1:3; Jer 6:10; 17:23; Mic 7:16; Zech 7:11 – 12). However, the specific phrases 'having eyes but not seeing' or 'having ears but not hearing' are almost without exception found in a context dealing with idolatry or idolators.

513 Evans, *To See*, 42; see, e. g., 6:9 – 10; 29:9, 18; 32:3; 35:5; 42:16; 43:8; 44:18.

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> Son of man, you are dwelling in the midst of a rebellious house, which has eyes to see, but does not see, and ears to hear, but does not hear, for they are a rebellious house.

Although the nature of the rebellion is not explicit in this passage, the particular intensity with which Ezekiel targets idolatry certainly makes it the likely offence. Further, the motif of dulled sensory organs and the association between idols and idolators was a prominent element in prophetic preaching.[514] It would not, therefore, be necessary to "state directly that Israel has become like idols; rather, the imagery of idolatry was shared knowledge."[515] Finally, the present formulation may have been influenced by Jeremiah 5:21, given the almost identical nature of the construction.[516]

Ezekiel uses a similar metaphor in 20:16 and, more explicitly, in 14:3 to identify Israel with its idols:

> וגם־אני נשׂאתי ידי להם במדבר לבלתי הביא אותם אל־הארץ אשׁר־נתתי זבת חלב
> ודבשׁ צבי היא לכל־הארצות : יען במשׁפטי מאסו ואת־חקותי לא־הלכו בהם ואת־שׁבתותי
> חללו כי אחרי גלוליהם לבם הלך :

> Further, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land that I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the splendor of all lands, because they rejected my judgments, did not follow my statutes, and profaned my Sabbaths; because their hearts went after their idols.
> (Ezek 20:15 – 16)

> בן־אדם האנשׁים האלה העלו גלוליהם על־לבם ומכשׁול עונם נתנו נכח פניהם

> Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces.
> (Ezek 14:3; cf. vv. 4, 7)

Ezekiel's use of לב, in these passages, reflects the language of malfunctioning sensory organs[517] in that it denotes "the locus of the moral will."[518] In both passages, the wider context indicates that a description of the moral and spiritual condition of a people who refuse to receive divine revelation is in view and, like

514 Block, *Ezekiel 1 – 24*, 367 – 8.

515 Kutsko, *Between*, 138.

516 The only difference in the two constructions is the use of infinitives in Ezekiel (Block, *Ezekiel 1 – 24*, 368). Further, Jeremiah also uses the saying to explain the people's rebellion (vv 22 – 28; note esp., לעם הזה היה לב סורר ומורה, v. 23). On the possible relationship between Ezek 12:1 – 2 and Isa 6, see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 269 – 70; Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1 – 19*, 171; Evans, *To See*, 49; Beale, *Become*, 122 – 3.

517 On the relationship between sensory malfunction/perception and the heart, see Evans, *To See*, 47 – 52; A. Luc, "לב," *NIDOTTE* 2:749 – 54; H.-J. Fabry, "לֵב," *TDOT* 7:412 – 34.

518 Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 115.

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the texts referring to sensory malfunction, grounds the reason for the obduracy in idolatry.

4.3.2.2 Images of Restoration in Ezekiel

Many have noted that the book of Ezekiel employs the notion of "reversal" within the macrostructure of the book. Thus, for instance, those judgments issued in the first part of the book (chaps. 1 – 32) are reversed in a later part (chaps. 34 – 38).[519] One of the most obvious reversals, touched on above, is the motif of YHWH's abandonment of the temple (e. g., 9:3; 10:4, 18, 19; 11:22 – 23). In the first part of the book, YHWH's כבוד departs from the Jerusalem temple, while in the vision of the new temple, YHWH's כבוד returns via the same gate by which it left (e. g., 43:2 – 4). This notion of reversal is also found in the restoration of YHWH's people. They are initially depicted as an idolatrous people in a terminology that recollects their attraction to the cultic images. Likewise, then, their renewal is also steeped in concepts that recollect cultic images.

The reversal of the idolatrous disposition of Israel is, however, already signaled before Ezekiel 34. Immediately following the description of Israel's elders as "men who have set up their idols in their hearts" (14:3), YHWH warns that all who do the same will be answered according to their idolatry (14:4 – 5):

לכן דבר־אותם ואמרת אליהם כה־אמר אדני יהוה איש איש מבית ישׂראל אשׁר יעלה
את־גלוליו אל־לבו ומכשׁול עונו ישׂים נכח פניו ובא אל־הנביא אני יהוה נעניתי לו
בה ברב גלוליו : למען תפשׂ את־בית־ישׂראל בלבם אשׁר נזרו מעלי בגלוליהם כלם :

> Therefore speak to them and say to them, Thus says the Lord YHWH: any one of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, I, YHWH, will answer him myself according to the multitude of his idols, in order that I may lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel, who are all estranged from me through their idols.

The subordinate conjunction למען in v. 5 indicates that the purpose of such a response by YHWH is to retake control of the people's hearts. The response of YHWH is further described in v. 8: YHWH will make the idolators a "sign" (אות) and a "byword" (משׁלים) and "cut them off from the midst of my people" (והכרתיו מתוך עמי). Moreover, v. 7 recasts the announcement of vv. 4 – 5 in a chiastic structure in order to highlight the reversal of the control over the people's heart,

519 See, e. g., Block, *Ezekiel 1 – 24*, 14 – 15; *idem*, *Ezekiel 25 – 48*, 271; L. Boadt, "The Function of the Salvation Oracles in Ezekiel 33 to 37," *HAR* 12 (1990), 13; Davis, *Swallowing*, 119; A. Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 220; J. Robson, *Word and Spirit in Ezekiel* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 174.

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from idols to YHWH,[520] which is further indicated by the expression "and you shall know that I am YHWH" (וידעתם כי־אני יהוה, v. 8).

Ezekiel 11:19 – 21, however, expresses the same sentiment even more directly.

ונתתי להם לב אחד ורוח חדשה אתן בקרבכם והסרתי לב האבן מבשׂרם ונתתי להם
לב בשׂר : למען בחקתי ילכו ואת־משפטי ישמרו ועשׂו אתם והיו־לי לעם ואני אהיה להם
לאלהים : ואל־לב שׂקוציהם ותועבותיהם לבם הלך דרכם בראשׁם נתתי נאם אדני יהוה :

I will give them one heart, and I will put in them a new spirit. I will remove the heart of stone from the flesh and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may walk in my statues and keep my judgments and obey them. They shall be my people, and I will be their God. But as for those whose heart is inclined toward their detestable things and their abominations, I put their deeds on their own heads, declares the Lord YHWH.

The same idea is expressed in almost exactly the same terms in Ezekiel 36:25 – 27[521]:

520 The verses are both chiastic and antithetical: A: The people separate themselves from YHWH / B: They set up idols in their hearts // B′: They place stumbling blocks before their faces / A′: They consult YHWH through a prophet.

521 MT Ezek 36:23c – 38 is omitted in the earliest Greek text, papyrus 967 (c. 3rd century CE) as well as Old Latin Codex Wirceburgensis (c. 6th century CE). See summaries of this discussion in Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 242, 245; Allen, *Ezekiel 20 – 48* [WBC; Dallas: Word, 1990], 177 – 8; Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 205 – 6; Block, *Ezekiel 25 – 48*, 337 – 43; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21 – 37*, 739 – 40. If p 967 represents a more primitive witness than MT, then the final section of chap. 36 must be regarded as a considerably later expansion (J. Lust, "Ezekiel 36 – 40 in the Oldest Greek Manuscript," *CBQ* 43 [1981], 517 – 33; *idem*, "The Use of Textual Witnesses for the Establishment of the Text: The Shorter and Longer Texts of Ezekiel," in *Ezekiel and His Book: Textual and Literacy Criticism and Their Interrelation* [ed. J. Lust; BETL 74; Leuven: University, 1986], 12 – 15; W. Irwin, *The Problem of Ezekiel* [Chicago: University, 1943], 62 – 65). There are, however, compelling reasons to regard these verses as stemming from an original Hebrew text. F. Filson notes the possibility that the missing verses in p 967 could be the result of *homoioteleuton* from the recognition formula of v. 23 to the one in v. 38 ("Omission of Ezek. 12.26 – 28 and 36.23b – 38 in Codex 967," *JBL* 62 [1943], 27 – 32). Although the accidental omission of 1,451 letters is somewhat hard to believe, this explanation has been accepted by J. Wevers (*Ezekiel* [London: Nelson, 1969], 273) and mentioned with little or no criticism by Allen (*Ezekiel 20 – 48*, 177), Kutsko (*Between*, 125 f. n.106), and Joyce (*Ezekiel*, 205 – 6). A. C. Johnson (*The John H. Scheide Biblical Papyri* [Princeton: University, 1938], 8 – 9), followed by M. Spottorno ("La omission de Ez 36,23b – 38 y la transposición de capítulos en el papiro 967," *Emerita* 50 [1982], 93 – 98) and Block (*Ezekiel 25 – 48*, 340), on the other hand, suggests the more plausible possibility that the omission could be the result of the loss of "a leaf or two." Against these arguments is the absence of these verses in the Latin text, which otherwise does not appear dependent on the Greek papyrus. Further, p 967 has a different chapter sequence than the MT (36:1 – 23 > 38 – 39 > 37 > 40 – 48). It would seem, therefore, that the Greek papyrus and the Latin codex might represent a different textual tradition than the one preserved in the MT. However, the jump from that to the conclusion that p 967 represents an earlier literary stage than the MT is completely unwarranted. The lacuna of p 967 is not evident in *any* extant Hebrew text, including the Ezekiel fragments (35:11 – 38:14) found at Masada that pre-date p 967 by around two

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וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם מכל טמאותיכם ומכל־גלוליכם אטהר אתכם :
ונתתי לכם לב חדש ורוח חדשה אתן בקרבכם והסרתי אתלב האבן מבשרכם ונתתי
לכם לב בשר : ואת־רוחי אתן בקרבכם ועשיתי את אשר־בחקי תלכו ומשפטי תשמרו
ועשיתם

I will sprinkle clean water upon you, so that you will be clean from all your uncleanness, and I will cleanse you from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and I will put a new spirit within you; I will take away the heart of stone from your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you walk in my statutes and be careful to keep my judgments.

What was commanded in 18:31 is here enabled by the actions of YHWH (cf. 11:19 – 21).[522] Significantly, these actions include YHWH "washing" the people from their impurities,[523] as well as a "heart transplant" and the indwelling of YHWH's own רוח. It also appears that Israel's restoration, depicted in these verses, is "playing on the cause of the impurity, namely, idolatry."[524] The "heart of stone" is replaced with a "heart of flesh," or a "living heart," and YHWH will implant his own "spirit," which will enable Israel to function appropriately.

Furthering this conclusion, Kutsko observes several linguistic connections that exist between Ezekiel 36 and Ezekiel 20:32 – 34,[525] which concludes the history of Israel's idolatry with a promise of restoration:

hundred years (S. Talmon, "1043 – 2220 [MasEzek] Ezekiel 35:11 – 38:14," in *Masada: The Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963 – 1965* [eds. J. Aviram et al.; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1999], 59 – 75; H. Patmore, "The Shorter and Longer Texts of Ezekiel: The Implications of the Manuscript Finds from Masada and Qumran," *JSOT* 32:2 [2007], 231 – 42). There are also literary and theological reasons for considering vv. 23c – 38 as original. Although there are a number of stylistic anomalies in the Hebrew of these verses (see, e. g., Lust, "Ezekiel 36 – 40"), there are also a number of constructions, phrases, and formulas that occur elsewhere in the book (see, esp., Block, *Ezekiel 25 – 40*, 337 – 40). Further, vv. 16 – 23b appears fragmentary on its own. The account of the vindication of YHWH's name would be incomplete without the verses, ending without an exposition of the holiness of the divine name (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 245; Kutsko, *Between*, 126 n.106; Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 206; Robson, *Word*, 242 n.158), and the inclusio created by the repitition in vv. 22 and 32 would be destroyed (Allen, *Ezekiel 20 – 48*, 177; Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 206; Kutsko, *Between*, 126 n.106; Robson, *Word*, 242 n.158).

522 The difference between Ezek 18 and 36 is understandable when read in the context of exile: "…the way that this theological shift from responsibility to passivity mirrors the social experience of the exiles…a shift from positions of social responsibility and power to a new world in which there is far less scope for influential decision making and action…This describes perfectly the position of priests like Ezekiel in the exile, who retained some of the authority of their calling without the practical possibility of carrying it out" (Mein, *Ethics*, 240).

523 On Ezekiel's understanding of idolatry as morally defiling for both the people and the land and its affinities with H, see J. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 30 – 1; cf. Levtow, *Images*, 153 n.59; Kutsko, *Between*, 126 n.110.

524 Kutsko, *Between*, 127.

525 See Kutsko, *Between*, 127 – 129.

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והעלה על־רוחכם היו לא תהיה אשר אתם אמרים נהיה כגוים כמשפחות הארצות
לשרת עץ ואבן : חי־אני נאם אדני יהוה אם־לא ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה ובחמה
שפוכה אמלוך עליכם : והוצאתי אתכם מן־העמים וקבצתי אתכם מן־הארצות אשר
נפוצתם בם ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה ובחמה שפוכה :

What is in your mind shall never happen—the thought, 'Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone' (עץ ואבן). As I live, declares the Lord YHWH, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out (בחמה שפוכה) I will be king over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered (נפוצתם), with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out (בחמה שפוכה).

The punishment for Israel's idolatry, expressed in vv. 32–34 as "poured out wrath," is found throughout Ezekiel 20 (vv. 8, 13, and 21).[526] However, the combination שׁפך ("pour out") and פוּשׁ ("scatter") occurs in such association elsewhere only at 36:18–19a, which reads,

ואשפך חמתי עליהם על־הדם אשר־שפכו על־הארץ ובגלוליהם טמאוה :
ואפיץ אתם בגוים

I poured out my wrath (ואשפך חמתי) upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it.[527] I scattered (ואפיץ) them among the nations.

There is, however, the possibility that a more interesting terminological interaction exists between these chapters, specifically, between Ezekiel 20:32 and 36:26.[528] Ezekiel's description of foreign gods as "wood and stone" in 20:32, although more subtle, functions as an abbreviated description of the phrase found in, e.g., Deuteronomy 4:28 –

ועבדתם שם אלהים מעשׂה ידי אדם עץ ואבן אשר לא יראון ולא ישׁמעון ולא יאכלון
ולא יריחן :

There (in exile) you will serve gods of wood and stone, the work of human hands, which cannot see, hear, or smell.[529]

526 Cf. 7:8; 9:8; 14:19; 22:22; 30:15.

527 The LXX omits על־הדם אשר־שפכו על־הארץ ובגלוליהם טמאוה and probably preserves the best reading. The addition is likely the result of harmonizing with v. 25 (ומכל־גלוליכם אטהר אתכם) and, thus, indicates an early confirmation of the interpretation proposed here that idolatry is the reason for YHWH's wrath (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 241, 246; Kutsko, *Between*, 128 n.112).

528 See Kutsko, *Between*, 128.

529 See, also, Isa 37:19 (כי לא אלהים המה כי אם מעשה ידי אדם עץ ואבן). On the relationship between Ezek 20 and Deut 4:25–28, see Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 360–61; Levtow, *Images*, 155; Block, *Ezekiel 1*, 649. On the relationship between Ezek 20:32–44 and Isa, see Lust, "Ezekiel Salutes Isaiah: Ezekiel 20,32–44," in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A. M. Beuken* (ed. J. van Ruiten and M. Vervenne; Leuven: Leuven University, 1997), 367–82.

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As we have seen, the cliché "wood and stone" is found frequently in the Hebrew Bible, often in a polemical context, questioning how a product of human hands could be considered a living god. Likewise, in the immediate context of 36:26, the people's "heart of stone" reflects their penchant for idolatry (cf. 14:3 – 4, 7; 20:16). Thus, in v. 25, restoration from idolatry is described in terms of YHWH "washing" his people from the impurities of idolatry. In v. 26, however, the metaphor is that of a heart transplant. The idolatrous stone-heart (לב האבן) will be replaced with a living heart (בשׂר לב). Thus, in the light of its own context (v. 25), its association with chapter 20, and the earlier use of the "obduracy" motif to identify Israel with its idolatry (chaps. 12, 14, and 20), it is certainly possible that Ezekiel 36:26 is interacting with the description of idols as "wood and stone" in order to describe the restoration of Israel in terminology associated with that very sin, i. e. the worship of idols. In both 20:32 and 36:26, the cliché is used to indicate what Israel is not (or should not be).[530]

In this light, Ezekiel 37:1 – 14, which describes the reconstruction of the scattered bones of Israel, may also provide a unique take on the idol-idolator analogy. As many have pointed out, the passage can be neatly divided into vision (vv. 1 – 10) and interpretation (vv. 12 – 14), with v. 11 providing the transition from the former to the latter.[531] The first unit begins by ascribing the prophet's vision to YHWH. As in other visions, Ezekiel is under the influence of YHWH's "hand" and "spirit" (37:1):

היתה עלי יד־יהוה ויוצאני ברוח יהוה ויניחני בתוך הבקעה

> The hand of YHWH was upon me and he brought me out in the spirit of YHWH and set me down in the middle of a valley.

The valley is then described as being full of many dry bones (vv. 1 – 2):

והיא מלאה עצמות ׃ והעבירני עליהם סביב סביב והנה רבות מאד על־פני
הבקעה והנה יבשׁות מאד

> And [the valley] was full of bones. And [YHWH] led me all around them; there were very many on the ground of the valley and they were very dry.

530 Cf. Jer 2:27; Hab 2:19 (on which, see Levtow, *Images*, 155). The term אבן occurs 17 times in Ezekiel, the majority of which refers to literal stones (13:11, 13; 16:40; 23:47; 26:12; 38:22; 40:42) or gems (1:26; 10:1, 9; 27:22; 28:13 – 14, 16). The only exceptions appear to be the description of idols in 20:32 and the figurative description of the people's heart in 11:19 and 36:26.

531 See, e. g., Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 257 – 258.

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Zimmerli describes the scene before Ezekiel as:

> [A] terrifying picture of a field of corpses. The bones have been lying about unburied for a long time, naked, already picked clean by the birds of the sky, stripped of their skin and flesh and sinews, bleached and dried out by the heat of the day, this scene is meant to impress upon Ezekiel…[it] is not simply a symbol of death but death to all its fullness – the great death."[532]

Kutsko, however, sees in these opening verses of chapter 37 a "close reflection" of 6:4–6. There, YHWH promises to throw the dead bodies of Israel in front of their idols and to scatter their bones around their altars.[533] Ezekiel 37 reverses this earlier scene: the scattered bones will be repaired.[534] Likewise, these verses make use of terminology that recollects cultic images in order to depict the restoration of the corpses. The function of Ezekiel 37:8b in this pericope is of utmost importance. The physical repair of the scattered bones is completed by v. 8a:

וראיתי והנה־עליהם גדים ובשׂר עלה ויקרם עליהם עור מלמעלה

> And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them.

The action is halted and, in the second part of the verse, the prophet observes: ורוח אין בהם ("but there was no spirit/breath in them"). The absent רוח then becomes the focus of the second part of the passage. Ezekiel is commanded to prophesy to the רוח so that the corpses may live (v. 9). The רוח enters into the corpses, they come to life, and stand on their feet (v. 10). The passage concludes in v. 14 with a promise that echoes 36:26 – "I will put my spirit in you and you shall live" (ונתתי רוחי בכם וחייתם).[535]

532 Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 259.

533 See above, pp. 189 f.

534 Strengthening the observation that these chapters reverse the judgment described in chap. 6 is the suggestion by Block, and others, that the charge to הנבא אל הרי ישׂראל in 36:1 is "ultimately drawn from 6:2" (שׂים פניך אל הרי ישׂראל והנבא אליהם) (Block, *Ezekiel 25–48*, 327; cf. Kutsko, *Between*, 125).

535 Many recognize this relationship between Ezek 36:26 ff. and 37:1–14. The most obvious connection is found in the almost verbatim repetition of YHWH's intention to place within his people his very own רוח. Further, there is a general consensus that the entire unit of 37:1–14 is an amplification or development of 36:26 ff. Allen, however, adduces further evidence "that an echo of 36:27 is intended" in 37:14 from the assurance of dwelling in the land both in 36:28 and 37:14 (Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 187). Such a move is consistent with other passages in the book. Thus, Block notes that "it is characteristic of Ezekiel to announce a theme briefly and then to drop it, only to return to it later with a fuller development" ("The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of *RWḤ* in The Book of Ezekiel," *JETS* 32:1 [1989], 39). Other examples included by Block are 5:11 expounded in 8:5–18; 37:26–27 and developed in 40–48; 3:16–21 expanded in 18:1–32 and 33:1–20.

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Jeremiah 10:14, Habakkuk 2:19, and Psalm 135:17 also express a similar sentiment in describing the inanimate nature of cultic images. These parodies explicitly identify the cultic images with their makers and/or their material in order to deny the efficacy of the consecration ritual. In other words, because they are made by humans and made out of profane material they cannot be alive – they lack רוח. Against this background Kutsko's observation that "the vision in Ezekiel 37 halts (in v. 8) at a point that leaves Israel equal to idols – and no better"[536] is extremely significant. The bones of 37:1 – 8, just like the cultic images of Mesopotamia, have been put together, yet neither has רוח and, therefore, cannot live. Kutsko concludes:

> Thus the re-creation process must continue…Indeed, the description of the creation of people in Ezek 37:1 – 11, similar to that of idols, can be characterized as one of craftsmanship: the scattered raw material of bones is refashioned, reconstructed, and reconnected (קרב, 37:7; cf. 37:17); the physical frame then receives its covering (sinew, flesh, skin) and finally its revivification.[537]

Many see in this two-stage process of Israel's restoration a reflection of the creation account in Genesis 2. Zimmerli, for instance, believes that Ezekiel 37:1 – 14 "takes as its model the process of the primeval creation of man as this is reported in Gen 2:7."[538] In Genesis 2:7, humanity is first formed and then made alive by the נשמת חיים ("breath of life"). Others add to this the observations that "the description of this valley of dry bones suggests imagery of the parched earth, which no man has yet cultivated,"[539] that "God plants a garden in Eden and sets (נוח) the man there (Gen 2:15), just as God promises to set (נוח) the reformed people back in their land (Ezek 37:14),"[540] that there is a "movement from chaos to order" in both passages,[541] and that נפח ("breathe") occurs in both passages (Gen 2:7; 37:9).[542] The fact that the respective texts use different terminology to describe the agent of life (נשמה, רוח) is often deemed insignificant, since both terms appear to have "overlapping semantic domains" in some late texts (e. g.,

536 Kutsko, *Between*, 137.
537 Kutsko, *Between*, 137.
538 Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 257.
539 Kutsko, *Between*, 133.
540 Kutsko, *Between*, 133 – 34. Kutsko also points out that the association between Gen 2:15 and Ezek 37:14 is further strengthened by the MT's vocalization of נוח as a *Hiphil* form II in both Ezek 37:14 (והנחתי) and in Gen 2:15 (וינחהו). Ezek 37:1 (ויניחני) and 40:2 (ויניחני) use form I.
541 M. Fox, "The Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of the Bones," *HUCA* 51 (1980), 10.
542 Robson, *Word*, 225. Robson also notes that "the phrase אדמת ישראל occurs seventeen times in Ezekiel, once in Ezek 37:1 – 14 (v. 12) and nowhere else in the Old Testament" and that "[t]he notion of 'working' (עבד) the ground is present in Gen 2:5 and Ezek 36:34 (though there "ground" is ארץ)."

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Isa 42:5).[543] Finally, the LXX appears already to make this connection by appending πνεῦμα ζωῆς to the end of 37:5.[544]

That Ezekiel 37:1 – 14 reflects some knowledge of the creation tradition found in Genesis 2 is almost universally recognized.[545] In this light, it is intriguing to reflect on the work of Schüle, who argues that the intention behind Genesis 2 – 3 is an attempt to reconsider the concept of humanity as cultic image, as espoused in the Priestly tradition of Genesis 1:26 – 28. Thus, Genesis 2 – 3 is acutely aware of the conceptualization of Mesopotamian cultic images that underlie the Priestly texts. He states,

> Looking at the process of the *mīs pî* ritual one might in fact be reminded of Gen 2 f. Similarities occur in the general pattern – the material shaping of the body, its being brought to life, the change of environment from some desert place to the garden – but also in details like the furnishing of the garden with plants and animals and the fact that God himself is present there and joins with Adam and Eve in the רוח היום, the early evening hours when there is a nice breeze coming in from the Mediterranean sea.[546]

In Schüle's reading, Genesis 2 – 3 provides an important critique of the Priestly assertion that man functions as God's cultic image:

> If man is the image of God…then we have to conceive of an image that is capable of responding to its creator; an image capable of approaching God in prayer, worship and sacrifice that come from its own creative powers, from its wisdom and from its deep devotion to what is made its own likeness: a fellow human being made of flesh and blood.[547]

Ezekiel 37:1 – 14 certainly appears, at first glance, to have a similar viewpoint. The all-important רוח-step in v. 8b provides the transition in the first half of the pericope, so that without it there is no life. Moreover, "[t]he *rwḥ* that will revitalize Israel is not the ordinary, natural life-breath common to all living things; it is the spirit of God himself."[548] God's very own spirit becomes then the agent of life, but life as defined by obedience, or in Schüle's terminology, the ability to respond in a correct manner. There are, however, significant differences between Ezekiel 37:1 – 14 and Genesis 2 – 3 (as understood by Schüle). Rather than providing Israel with the ability to respond to YHWH from her own creative powers and wisdom, Ezekiel 36 – 37 appears to ground this ability in the power and presence of YHWH himself to make obedience an inescapable reality.

543 Robson, *Word*, 225 – 6; cf. R. Albertz and C. Westermann, "רוח, spirit," *TLOT* 3:1209.
544 Robson, *Word*, 226 n.82; Kutsko, *Between*, 133 n.30.
545 See, however, Petersen, "Creation," 169 – 78.
546 Schüle, "Image of God," 13.
547 Schüle, "Image of God," 19.
548 Block, "Prophet," 38.

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4.3.2.2.1 Spirit in Ezekiel

The power of the divine רוח to transform a rebellious people into a people who will properly represent and respond to YHWH is an important facet in the book of Ezekiel.[549] Although there is nothing comparable to Ezekiel's רוח -step in the transformative rituals of Mesopotamia, "the ritual qua ritual, representing the final stage in the making of a statue, is analogous to the final stage in the re-creation of humans in Ezek 37:1 – 14."[550] Moreover, the concept of a god or goddess "indwelling" a statue can certainly be gleaned from extant Babylonian literature. Thus, for instance, the Poem of Erra describes Marduk's abandonment of his statue and temple in terms that could easily be understood along these lines. In the poem, the ploy to persuade Marduk to abandon Babylon to Erra's own oversight[551] is dependent on convincing Marduk to depart from his statue.[552]

Of course, the Ezekelian feature that is most comparable to the description of Marduk's departure and return in the Poem of Erra is not the רוח, but the divine כבוד. According to the vision recorded in Ezekiel 8 – 11, it is the כבוד that abandons the Jerusalem temple only to return at the end of the book. Many have noted that Ezekiel's description of כבוד shares characteristics with the Priestly concept. Both, for example, describe the divine כבוד as essentially a physical

549 רוח in Ezekiel, and indeed the entire Hebrew Bible, is a term with various but related meanings, making it often difficult to specify exact nuances. Ezekiel makes great use of the inherent ambiguity of the term: he uses it more than it is used in any other book in the Bible (52 times), reflecting almost every possible meaning of the term. For this reason, Ezekiel has been dubbed "[t]he Prophet of the Spirit" (Block, "Prophet," 28). Indeed, Block finds that the presence of such a variety of meanings for רוח in the book highlights the "literary genius" of the author, as a master of ambiguity, and often makes it difficult to ascertain whether one or multiple senses are intended in any singular occurrence ("Prophet," 29). Such ambiguity occurs in Ezek 37:1 – 14, where רוח is used ten times with three, or perhaps four, different meanings. It is not my purpose here to detail all of the various functions of רוח in Ezekiel. For such an analysis see, e. g., Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 566 – 68; Block, "Prophet," 27 – 49; P. Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 109 – 11; J. Woodhouse, "The 'Spirit' in the Book of Ezekiel," in *Spirit of the Living God I* (ed. B. G. Webb; Sydney: Lancer, 1991), 1 – 22; H. E. Hosche, "RÛAH in the Book of Ezekiel: A Textlinguistic Analysis," *JOTT* 14 (2002), 77 – 125; P. E. Kinlaw, "From Death to Life: The Expanding רוח in Ezekiel," *PRSt* 30 (2003), 161 – 72; Robson, *Word*, 18 – 26.

550 Kutsko, *Between*, 137 n.138.

551 Bodi, *Erra*, 192; cf. Bottéro, *Mythes*, 266.

552 W. G. Lambert notes that "when Era decides to let loose destruction on the universe, he goes to Marduk and has to persuade him to take a very serious step. To avoid being present at the time of disaster he must separate himself from his statue. Without an understanding of this point the greater part of the first three tablets is meaningless" ("Review of F. Grossman, Das Era Epos," *AfO* 18 [1957 – 58], 399). On the translation of the Akk. *šukuttu* as "statue," see above, chap. 2 n.28.

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phenomenon[553] that functions as the primary manifestation of YHWH's presence in the tabernacle and temple. Thus, in the Priestly literature, כבוד appears as a fire surrounded by a cloud (Ex 24:16–17; Nu 17:7) dwelling in, or upon, the tabernacle (e.g., Ex 40:34–38; Num 9:15).[554] Such a description stands in contrast to the Deuteronom(ist)ic שם theology, which removes any manifestation of YHWH's presence in the temple, leaving only his "name" to dwell there as a hypostasis.[555] Yet, the concrete, Priestly image of the כבוד is still "more remote, less anthropomorphic"[556] than the descriptions of YHWH's presence in other non-priestly material. For instance, the description of the Priestly כבוד is a far cry from the explicitly anthropomorphic presentation of YHWH in Genesis 18:1–2, where YHWH appears to Abraham as one of "three men" (שלשה אנשים).[557]

The visible, fire-like manifestation of YHWH's כבוד does reflect language that bears cultic image connotations. Scholars have long noted that the characterization of YHWH's כבוד as "fire" or "radiance" (e.g., נגה, Ezek 10:4; זרח, Isa 60:1–2) that causes fear (Lev 9:23–24; Deut 5:24; cf. Ex 20:18), or at least caution,[558] and is transferable (e.g., Ex 34:29ff; Isa 42:8; 48:11; Jer 2:11), is comparable to the Mesopotamian concept of *melammu*, the numinous essence that radiated from the statues of the gods.[559] Moreover, Bunta observes that some

553 See, e.g., Bunta, "Cult Statue," 232–33; Kutsko, *Between*, 79–93; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomic School*, 200–206; *idem*, "כָּבוֹד," *TDOT* 7:22–38.

554 Note, however, the location of the כבוד in Ex 16:10, where the כבוד יהוה is seen in the distant wilderness, and 24:16, where it dwells upon Sinai.

555 See, e.g., von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:184; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomic School*; Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 38–79. Note, however, the recent monograph by S. L. Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology: lešakkēn šemô šām in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2002). Richter argues that the Hebrew *šakkēn šēm* and *śîm šēm* is a loan idiom/translation of the Akk. *šuma šakānu* meaning "inscribe/set up a monument bearing the name and proclaiming ownership and hegemony." Thus, "to place a name" means only "to establish ownership/hegemony." In this way, the temple is not a place of divine presence for D/DtrH but a monument emphasizing "the sovereignty and fame of YHWH by right of conquest" (217).

556 Kutsko, *Between*, 81.

557 Gen 16:7, 13; 17:1, 22; 28:13; 32:23–33; cf. J. Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism in the Old Testament," *Congress Volume, Oxford, 1959* (VTSupp 7; Leiden: Brill, 1960), 35; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 124.

558 Kutsko, *Between*, 80 f., notes that the danger of the divine כבוד is highlighted by numerous texts. This is especially true of the so-called murmuring narratives (see, e.g., Ex 16:7, 10; Num 14:10; 16:19; 17:7; 20:6; cf. Deut 5:24–25; Lev 9:23–24). Further, only Moses is allowed to see the כבוד (Ex 24:17–18), which has physical consequences (Ex 33:18 with 34:29 ff.). Ultimately, however, it proves too much even for him (Ex 40:34–35; cf. 1 Kgs 8:10–11).

559 Note also the somewhat synonymous *puluḫtu*, *rašubbatu*,and *namurratu* (see Weinfeld, "כָּבוֹד" *TDOT* 7:29–31; *CAD* M 2:9–12; Oppenheim, "*puluḫtu*," 31–34; *idem. Ancient Mesopotamia*, 98; Haran, "Shining," 167–68; Sanders, "Old Light," 400–06; Bunta, "Cultic Statue," 233; Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 103–6.

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texts articulate the "seeing" of כבוד in ways that recall "the language of seeing Yhwh in the temple setting" (e.g., Ps 63:3),[560] while others explicitly contrast YHWH's כבוד with foreign idols (e.g., Ps 106:20).[561] Many of these same characteristics are likewise found in Ezekiel's depiction of כבוד. Thus, for instance, Ezekiel retains the association of "fire" and "cloud" with the divine כבוד (Ezek 1:4, 27 – 28; 8:2) and "radiant splendor (10:4 [נגה]; 43:2 [אור])."[562] Ezekiel's כבוד, likewise, reflects many of the same abstract qualities of the Priestly presentation and serves a similar function – to enable the exiles to "weather the crisis of the fall of Jerusalem…and the Babylonian exile."[563] In the face of exile and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, YHWH's presence needed to be accessible outside (or without) the tabernacle/temple. Although the Jerusalem temple is the primary location of YHWH's presence, in the vision(s) of chapters 1 and 10 the כבוד appears with "wheels" (אופנים, 1:15 – 21; 10:9 – 17; cf. 3:13; 11:22). This emphasis on mobility culminates with the departure of the כבוד from the temple and the city toward the east (11:23). Many, thus, draw the implication that YHWH's presence travels with his people into exile.[564] Indeed, the location of Ezekiel's initial vision (בארץ כשדים על־נהר־כבר, 1:3) and the vision of chapters 8 – 11 (אני יושב בביתי, 8:1), where the prophet sees a "humanoid"[565] form of YHWH's כבוד (8:2 – 4; cf. 1:26 – 28), point in this direction. Further, Ezekiel rejects the argument of the inhabitants of Jerusalem that the exiles have gone far from YHWH, insisting that YHWH is present among the exiles as a מקדש מעט ("sanctuary for a little while" or "sanctuary to a lesser extent," 11:15 – 16).[566]

The anthropomorphic characteristics attributed to YHWH's כבוד in the book of Ezekiel are, however, distinct from the Priestly literature. Primarily, these anthropomorphic statements are found in Ezekiel 1:1 – 3:15 and 8:1 – 11:25. The most significant statement occurs at 1:26 (cf. 8:2), where Ezekiel describes YHWH's כבוד as having a human form: "Above the likeness (דמות) of a throne was the likeness (דמות) as the appearance (מראה) of a man." Nevertheless, like P, the Ezekielian כבוד remains too elusive and abstract to ever function "fully (or

560 Bunta, "Cultic Statue," 233. Bunta suggests that such language corresponds to the concept of "seeing the face (*panim*) of YHWH" that has also been compared to encountering a deity by means of its cultic image in the ancient Near East (see Niehr, "Search," 83 – 85; Seow, "Face," 609 – 10).

561 Bunta, "Cultic Statue", 233.

562 Weinfeld, "כָּבוֹד" *TDOT* 7:27.

563 S. Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel* (The Aramaic Bible; Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1987), 3; cf. Kutsko, *Between*, 94 – 99; Joyce, "Dislocation and Adaption in the Exilic Age and After," in *After the Exile: Essays in Honor of Rex Mason* (ed. J. Barton and D. J. Reimer; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University, 1996), 56 – 8.

564 E.g., Kutsko, *Between*, 93; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 124; Barr, "Theophany," 37.

565 Mettinger, *Dethronement*, 113.

566 On מקדש מעט as the assurance of YHWH's presence in Exile, see Joyce, "Dislocation," 57; cf. Kutsko, *Between*, 98 – 99; Levtow, *Images*, 155

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socially, liturgically) like a statue."[567] For this reason, in both P and Ezekiel, humanity is likened to cultic images, functioning as the iconic counterpart to the abstract כבוד.[568]

However, Ezekiel and P appear to disagree on their respective assessment of the effectiveness of the original creation to transform humanity into a proper representation of the deity and of the exclusivity of the concept. For the Priestly authors, humanity was originally created as God's image (Gen 1:26–28). The creation of humanity as a divine image was achieved by God's spoken word made effective by the divine רוח. For Ezekiel, however, humanity is not from the beginning fit to take this title or function in this way. Thus, Ezekiel's view on creation, in general, is at odds with the Priestly point of view. Moreover, for Ezekiel, it is not humanity that functions as the image of God, but a renewed and transformed Israel. Creation was not enough; what is needed is a second act of YHWH, a re-creation. The result of the re-creation, however, corresponds to Genesis 1: In both P and Ezekiel the divine agent who makes humanity/Israel into a divine image is רוח and the result is to make the subject into an appropriate representation of the deity.

This transformative function of רוח is not only seen in those instances where "a radical spiritual revitalization of the nation"[569] is in view. It is also apparent in Ezekiel's own experience. According to J. Robson, the divine "רוח is essential for [Ezekiel's] obedience to Yahweh's word"[570] and his transformation into YHWH's "mouthpiece."

In Ezekiel 2:2 and 3:24, רוח enters into Ezekiel (ותבא בי) and sets him on his feet (ותעמדני על־רגלי). Likewise, in both instances, this experience corresponds to the appearance and "speaking" of the כבוד יהוה (1:26–2:2; 3:23–24).[571] This correspondence leads Woodhouse to identify the רוח here with the רוח in 37:10 and, thus, to the translation "life-breath."[572] The identification is strengthened by the other occurrences of רוח as the subject of בוא followed by the preposition ב, all of which occur in Ezekiel 37 (vv. 5, 9, 10).[573] Others, however, see in these two occurrences an implicit reference to the presence of YHWH. Allen, for instance,

567 Bunta, "Cultic Statue," 235.

568 Bunta, "Cultic Statue," 235. Bunta describes the כבוד as "a prolongation of the numinous value of the cultic statue of Yhwh."

569 Block, "Prophet," 39.

570 Robson, *Word*, 213.

571 However, the phrase כאשר דבר אלי in 2:2 is often judged to be a later addition. See, e.g., Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 89; Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1994), 10; E. Tov, "Recensional Differences Between the MT and LXX of Ezekiel," *ETL* 62 (1986), 93; J. Lust, "Notes to the Septuagint: Ezekiel 1–2," *ETL* 75 (1999), 23.

572 Woodhouse, "The 'Spirit'," 12–13.

573 Robson, *Word*, 116.

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argues that Ezekiel 2:2 refers to "the spirit-power which proceeds from God"[574] and that the רוח is an "objective force that stands on the divine side of reality."[575] Moreover, he states that "[i]t is difficult not to relate this force to the empowering of the living beings and wheels in 1:12, 20 – 21. The lack of an article accords with the stereotyped style of spirit-control in 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 24a; 43:5…"[576] Block also connects the "dynamic and energizing power" of the רוח in 2:2 with the same רוח that had animated the wheels in 1:12, 20 – 21.[577] There, the רוח החיה animates the "wheels" of the living creatures.[578] Significantly, Block suggests that the phrase רוח החיה in 1:20 – 21 (cf. 10:17) does not refer merely to the "spirit of the living creatures," but rather should be interpreted as "the spirit of life – that is, the divine animating principle."[579] Finally, Robson believes that there is in these occurrences "deliberate ambiguity," not unlike what occurs in 37:1 – 14. He notes that up to this point, only 1:4 corresponds to 2:2 and 3:24 in terms of the feminine gender of רוח. This, then, suggests to him the meaning "wind." However, he notes that in the retrospective light of 37:1 – 14, "the meaning 'life-breath' seems preferable." Despite this ambiguity, Robson points out that YHWH is still the source of the "Spirit's" action. More significantly, Robson notes that the רוח functions in these instances not simply to communicate the spoken words but "to revive the prophet, so that he is enabled to hear and to respond to Yahweh's word."[580]

The difference between Ezekiel and his addressees in these chapters is highlighted by those motifs which we saw earlier cast Israel in terms of illicit cultic images. Although not explicitly stated, the commission appears to anticipate the refusal of the people of Israel to "hear."[581] In contrast to the people, who may or may not "hear" (2:5, 7; 3:11, 27), Ezekiel is commanded to "hear" (2:8; 3:10; cf. v. 17). Moreover, the "stone heart" of the people is already evident in 2:4 and 3:7 and contrasts with the prophet who is commanded to "receive in your heart and hear with your ears" (קח בלבבך ובאזניך שמע, 3:10). Further, the

574 Allen, *Ezekiel 1 – 19*, 38; cf. C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel* (2 vols; trans. J. Martin; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1876), 1:48.

575 Allen, *Ezekiel 1 – 19*, 38.

576 Allen, *Ezekiel 1 – 19*, 38.

577 Block, *Ezekiel 1 – 24*, 115.

578 For the relationship between Ezekiel's vision and ancient Near Eastern images, see Keel, *Jahwe-Visionen*, 125 – 273.

579 Block, *Ezekiel 1 – 24*, 100 n.71; *idem*, "Prophet," 36 – 7, esp. n.28. Block notes that both the LXX (πνεῦμα ζωῆς) and Vulgate (*spiritus vitae*) point in this direction. Note also the use of חיה instead of חיים for "life" in Ezek 7:13 (cf. Ps 74:19, 78:50; 143:3; Job 33:18, 20, 22).

580 Robson, *Word*, 213 – 214. Further, looking specifically at 2:2, Robson states, "[i]t is, in fact, possible to go further than this. A comparison between v. 1 and v. 2 points to the fact that רוח *brings about* Ezekiel's obedience to the command that Yahweh has given" (*Word*, 214; cf. Allen, *Ezekiel 1 – 19*, 60 – 61).

581 Robson, *Word*, 210.

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demands subsequent to 3:24 include the "immobility" (v. 25) and "dumbness" (v. 26) motifs, which may allude to Mesopotamian incantation texts,[582] and a reference to YHWH "opening the mouth" (אפתח את־פיך) of the prophet (v. 27).[583] Significantly, then, after the "infusion" of רוח, in 3:24, the prophet became the source of divine oracles, which parallels the purpose of subjecting cultic images to the *pīt pî* ceremony.[584]

Further, the infusing of the divine רוח is also integral to Ezekiel's obedience in his visions (3:12, 14 – 15; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1; 43:5).[585] This is most evident in 3:14 – 15, where YHWH's command to "go to the exiles" (v. 11) is followed by a description of רוח picking the prophet up and carrying him to the prescribed destination (vv. 14 – 15). Robson, following Schwartz, notes that the compelling action of רוח outshines even the divine כבוד in this passage: "The fact that the action of רוח in transporting Ezekiel opens the narrative in 3:12 after the commissioning speech and is then repeated in 3:14 highlights not the movement of Yahweh's glory (3:12aB-13), which is 'parenthetical,' but the action of רוח, which is 'paramount.'"[586]

The action of the רוח in these passages, therefore, emphasizes the necessity for divine presence and power in Ezekiel's ability to fulfill his mission to represent YHWH before Israel (both in Jerusalem and in exile). Robson aptly concludes, "the involvement of רוח in the ministry of the prophet, especially at 2:2, points to a prophet constrained by Yahweh, and whose obedience is effected by רוח."[587] The רוח in these passages, while sometimes ambiguous, is clearly at the initiative and instigation of YHWH. Further, "the action of רוח as agent in 2:2 and 3:24 is not simply external, seizing the prophet like an object, but is now *internal*."[588]

Thus, the transforming power of the internalized רוח is seen both in the transformation of the nation into an obedient people and in the transformation of Ezekiel into an obedient prophet. In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet himself becomes the model for Israel – just as he requires the indwelling רוח of YHWH in order to fulfill his role as "mouthpiece of YHWH," so also will the exiles need the

582 See above, pp. 175 f.

583 See above, pp. 176 f.

584 Likewise, J. Taylor states that after the "infusion" of רוח in 3:24, "Ezekiel was to be known as nothing but the mouthpiece of Yahweh. When he spoke, it was because God had something to say; when he was silent, it was because God was silent" (*Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* [London: IVP, 1969], 74).

585 Robson, *Word*, 214.

586 Robson, *Word*, 215; cf. B. Schwartz, "The Concentric Structure of Ezekiel 2:1 – 3:15," in *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies: Jerusalem, August 16 – 24 1989* (Jerusalem, 1990), 110.

587 Robson, *Word*, 215.

588 Robson, *Word*, 215; cf. D. Lys, *Rûach: Le Souffle dans L'Ancien Testament* (Études d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses; Paris: Universitaires de France, 1962), 130 f.

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רוח in order to become the proper re-presentation of YHWH to the nations (see, e. g., 36:23 – 24). In both cases, moreover, Ezekiel makes use of conceptions and language that recollect the imagery of cultic statues in order to drive home the point that *people* function as his images, not the cultic statues of Mesopotamia. It is in his people that YHWH's רוח will reside.

4.3.5 Conclusion

The crisis of 587 BCE, the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and the deportation of the exiles to Babylon, is the "conceptual and compositional center of the Book of Ezekiel."[589] Thus, above all, the book seeks to answer the questions, "Why has this happened?"; "What does it mean?"; and "How can it be resolved?" We have attempted to demonstrate that Ezekiel made use of the Mesopotamian conceptualization of cultic images in order to answer these questions. In one sense this should not be surprising since the prophet viewed Israel's idolatry as the ultimate cause of their defeat and subjugation. Indeed, he chose to use an analogy found in both late pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic literature to make this clear. Those who worship idols become like them – deaf, blind, and dead. Accordingly, the punishment for idolators mirrors the actions taken against the cultic images of a defeated people: 1) they would be destroyed alongside their idols and their bones scattered around their altars (e. g., 6:4 – 6, 13); and 2) they would be abducted and carried off into a foreign land (e. g., 36:18 – 19a; cf. 20:32 – 4).

Although the punishment is carried out by the Babylonians, Ezekiel presents the calamity as stemming from YHWH. Along the lines of the Ark Narrative and the prophetic parodies, YHWH remains in control despite the defeat and subjugation of Israel. First and foremost, this is seen in the portrayal of YHWH's כבוד voluntarily leaving his temple and traveling into exile with his people. A literary move that again demonstrates Ezekiel's participation in the rhetoric of divine image motifs found elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Further, the continued power and presence of YHWH is seen in the resolution of his people's deportation: YHWH would reverse the idolatrous nature of his people and bring them back to their land. Ezekiel describes this reversal in terms that recollect the people's relationship with their idols. YHWH would wash Israel from its impurities (36:25 – 27), take back the hearts of his people (14:5), remove the heart of stone (11:19; 36:25 – 27), and replace it with a living heart and his own spirit (36:25 – 27; cf. 11:19 – 21). This process is described in some detail in Ezekiel 37:1 – 14, where the scattered bones of idolatrous Israel are repaired and pro-

589 Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 355.

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vided with YHWH's own spirit in order to bring them back to life. The final step in the re-creation of Israel in Ezekiel 37:1 – 14, the infusion of YHWH's own spirit, becomes the means by which Israel is transformed into an obedient people and is also comparable to the conceptualization of cultic images wherein the deity was thought to reside. In other words, the people of Israel will be purified, repaired, and consecrated as YHWH's divine images before being sent back to their own land. The importance of the infusion of YHWH's spirit in the transformation of Israel becomes clear when viewed in the light of Ezekiel's own call to become YHWH's representative to Israel. Just as YHWH must enable Ezekiel to "hear" and "speak," so also the divine presence must enter the dead, idolatrous people of Israel to enable them to become the means by which YHWH would make his name known to the nations. In this way, Ezekiel's experience becomes the model for the transformation of Israel.

That Ezekiel shares many characteristics with P is universally recognized. Moreover, many note that Ezekiel's description of the visible form of YHWH's כבוד is related to the Priestly description of humanity as the image of God. The reflection of this Priestly conceptualization is seen throughout Ezekiel, and not just at 1:26 – 28. There is much to commend this theory. Both P and Ezekiel are struggling to deal with the complete destruction of the temple, the dwelling place of Israel's god. In the face of divine absence and in the context of Mesopotamian cult image tradition, both argue that YHWH does not dwell in lifeless idols, made by human hands of profane material. Instead, the presence and power of their god can be found in humans. Further, as we have argued, in both places the divine רוח plays an integral role in the creation/recreation of humans as divine images. However, this conceptualization is much subtler in Ezekiel. Kutsko argues that this is due to Ezekiel's polemical context, i. e. the prophet's refusal to use the term צלם in a positive way. However, this explanation is not entirely satisfying. There are a number of important differences between P and Ezekiel on this point. P assumes that humanity was made in צלם אלהים at creation (reaffirmed after the flood-judgment, Gen 9:6), whereas creation does not play such a prominent role in Ezekiel and, where it does, is often viewed in terms of judgment. Indeed, Ezekiel argues that creation was not enough and what is needed is re-creation. Further, according to P, all of humanity was made in the image of אלהים. Ezekiel is less optimistic or, at least, more specific. According to the prophet, only a renewed *Israel* can sufficiently represent יהוה as his divine image.

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5. Conclusions

5.1 Summaries and Conclusions

Genesis 1:26 – 27, Exodus 34:29 – 35, and Ezekiel 36 – 37 are different in many details. However, the three texts all appear to make some sort of comparison between living humans and a deity by means of an analogy with cultic images. Traditionally, the idea that these texts might demonstrate the legitimacy of a human actually becoming the extension and manifestation of Israel's god has been dismissed out of hand. Thus, Genesis 1:26 – 27 is usually construed as referring to humans imitating God in form and/or regal function, Exodus 34:29 – 35 is often interpreted as signifying God's continued support for Moses' leadership, and Ezekiel 37 is commonly deemed to be describing YHWH's ability to resurrect Israel from exile (= death).

However, given the complicated nature of representation in ancient Mesopotamia, we have re-examined these texts for the possibility that such a conceptualization is reflected in these passages. Representation in the ancient Mesopotamian environment was far more complex than our modern conceptions, which depend on a Platonic view of representation as *mimesis*. In such a view, the representation and the one represented are understood as disparate things, the former considered a secondary imitation of reality. This view, however, simply does not account for the evidence in Mesopotamia where an "image" (Akk. *ṣalmu*) is treated like a living, breathing being and functions as a valid (i. e. real) substitute for the one represented.

The ancient Mesopotamians were aware of the problems involved in treating their images like living substitutes. Thus, these inanimate objects were subjected to "transformative rituals," such as the *mīs pî / pīt pî*. These rituals used language of gestation and birth to enliven the image and ritually nullify the human craftsmanship so that the image could extend and manifest the presence of the referent. After the ritual, these images were described (e. g., called by name), cared for (fed, bathed, clothed), punished (tried and killed), and protected (by

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curses that call for the end of progeny) as if they shared a real and living connection to the one represented.

Humans could also function as the image of a deity or another person in ancient Mesopotamia. Evidence for the latter is found in the ritual of the substitute king, which provided a living substitute for the king in the event that an evil omen threatened the king's life. During this ritual, a living person was given the king's name, clothes, and insignia, thus transforming him into a living image of the king. Likewise, certain humans were also described as the image of a god. In the handful of examples of this designation, most refer to the king and one refers to an *āšipu* priest. Although the more common interpretation is that these designations are merely functional, a closer look reveals that more is likely involved. Of the four (or five) designations of the king as the image of god, one appears to work in the opposite direction (Esarhaddon), another appears to be explicitly based on the conceptualization of a divine cult statue (Tukulti-Ninurta II), and two of the four (Esarhaddon) are from the pen of an *āšipu* priest (three if Ašaridu was also an *āšipu*). The single exception to the royal monopoly on this designation is found in an incantation to remove illness from a person and designates an *āšipu* priest as the image of Marduk in his attempt to bring about an effective cure. The real possibility that the *āšipu* priests were the group responsible for describing the king in terms of the divine image makes a merely functional interpretation unlikely, since this was the group responsible for the rites that transformed an inanimate statue into a living god.

Enough internal evidence exists to support the conclusion that the chosen biblical passages also share this sort of conceptualization. Despite the overly pessimistic view of the later biblical authors, material objects were almost certainly believed to extend and manifest the presence of God in pre-exilic Israel. These authors admit that there were cultic representations in the early cult. "High place" worship, for instance, consisted of standing stones and sacred trees. These divine representations appear to function in ways similar to cultic images in Mesopotamia. They were thought to mark the location of the divine presence. Standing stones were anointed and empowered to see and hear. Although such explicit descriptions are absent when evaluating the function of the אשרה, its place in the pre-exilic cult and the fact that there was a goddess by the same name in the Ugaritic cult point toward a similar conclusion.

Further, the familiarity of the biblical authors with traditions and conceptualizations of the iconic cult is also found in the positive description of the ark, as well as the negative rhetoric against the cultic practices of the surrounding nations. Positively, we noted that the ark, in 1 Samuel 2, 4 – 6, and 2 Samuel 6, is characterized in ways similar to anthropomorphic images in the ancient Near East. Its capture is described as the departure of YHWH. The departure is, however, interpreted as occurring according to YHWH's own vo-

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lition (not as his defeat). Its return meant the return of YHWH to his people and, therefore, an indication of divine approval of the current political power. As such, the ark in this narrative functioned to indicate the localized presence of YHWH.

Likewise, the later polemics against such cultic concepts demonstrate Israel's familiarity with this type of rhetoric and belief. These polemics engaged in the rhetoric of mutilation and destruction of cultic representations, as well as the erasure and re-inscription of divine names. Most revealing, however, is the explicit denial that a humanly crafted statue could ever become a living god. In its most expansive and detailed form, these denials constitute a rhetorical deconstruction of the specific Mesopotamian rituals thought to transform the dead statue into a living god. The Israelite parodies targeted these rituals and rhetorically reconnected the image with the profane material and human craftsmanship.

In chapter 4, we examined three well-known passages in the Hebrew Bible in the light of our conclusions regarding the nature of representation in Mesopotamia, the presence of divine representation in the pre-exilic cult, and the familiarity with and participation in rhetoric surrounding iconic cultic ritual and literary practice. These three passages all share a common characteristic. They use the conceptualization of cultic images to relate (a) living person(s) to deity. These passages have traditionally been interpreted in terms of imitation and/or thought of as merely propagandistic. However, if our previous conclusions regarding representation in Mesopotamia are correct, then the interpretation of these biblical passages as merely imitative and propagandistic must also be re-evaluated.

In our first passage, we re-examined the Priestly assertion that humanity was created בצלם אלהים. We highlighted the influence of extra-biblical, comparative literature on the phrase over the long history of interpretation, which has swung from a consensus on humanity's resemblance to God in certain spiritual capacities to an indication of physical resemblance to, finally, the conclusion that both the spiritual and physical dimensions of humans must be in view. This latter interpretation, that humanity was made in such a way that it resembled god in both outward form and inward capability, allowed the conversation to focus on the purpose for which humanity was made בצלם אלהים. Since the 1960s one conclusion has all but dominated the field of biblical studies: humanity is like God in that it rules over the earth as God's subordinate ruler. In other words, humanity imitates God's function as ruler and, in this capacity, functions as a reminder of God's supreme rule.

There are, however, a number of reasons to question this interpretation, especially when viewed in the light of our conclusions regarding representation in ancient Mesopotamia. Despite the greater prevalence of the concept that

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humans functioned like divine images in Egypt, a Mesopotamian influence is the more likely. As many have pointed out, the biblical expression contains the exact cognate of the Akkadian *ṣalmu*, the term used most often to refer to cultic images in Mesopotamia. Further, the ideology and theology of cultic images encountered by the Priestly theologians in exile also provides a better time of transfer, as well as a motivation for usage. צלם was used as a polemical device, designed to contradict the common conceptualization that a cultic statue could become a god.

The influence of Mesopotamian culture and literature on the Priestly literature provides further evidence that the expression צלם אלהים refers to more than mere imitation. More specifically, the long-noted similarities between Genesis 1 and *Enuma Elish*, combined with the cultic function of the Babylonian creation epic in the *akītu* festival, point toward the possibility that Genesis 1 was likely used in a similar fashion. The passage's overall structure and content can be adequately explained by cultic and ritual concerns. The vocabulary, formulas, repeated actions, and the counting of days all echo liturgical and ritual patterns. Further, Genesis 1 presents creation in terms of temple-building and consecration, reflecting the installation of temple appurtenances, priestly personnel, various lower gods, and the entrance of the image of the god. Within this cultic and ritual literary environment appears the Hebrew term צלם.

An examination of the language and syntax of Genesis 1:26 – 27 confirmed the conclusion that humanity's purpose in the world was to serve as God's cultic statue, manifesting his power and presence. Nothing in the syntax prevents one from interpreting the preposition ב on צלם as *essentiæ* ("as, serving as") and the emphasis in the following verses suggests such a reading. Further, a study of the use of the term צלם, in the Hebrew Bible, likewise demonstrated that the Hebrew term reflects the characteristics of the Akkadian *ṣalmu*. Both terms are typically found in cultic contexts, referring to statuary, figurines, or humans in their function as substitutes. Certainly there is nothing so elaborate in the Hebrew Bible as the Mesopotamian "rites of constitution," which were thought to transform the *ṣalmu* into a valid substitute. However, the "embedded poem" found in v. 27 contains characteristics also found in incantations, such as chiasm, parallelism, and repetition. These elements were used in rituals to create a sense of unity between opposing elements. They rhetorically correspond to the principle of encoding the image with characteristics of the referent, e. g., the name of Marduk in the incantation *āšipu ṣa-lam Marduk* or אלהים in בצלם אלהים ברא אתו.

Finally, the Priestly use of צלם in Genesis 5:3 and 9:6 also corresponds to the ancient conceptualization of representation or rather: "presentification." Just as the relationship between the image and the referent is equated to progeny in Mesopotamia, Genesis 5:3 describes the father and son relationship in such

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terms. Likewise, just as the representations are often protected by a curse, Genesis 9:6 "inscribes" humanity, as the image of God, with a curse: "Whoever sheds the blood of a human, for that human shall his blood be shed, because God made humanity as the image of God."

The second passage that we investigated for the belief that humans could extend and manifest divine presence was Exodus 34:29 – 35. We noted that the picture of Moses descending the mountain in this passage is now found in a literary context that is primarily concerned with the issue of divine representation. The need for some sort of cultic representation brings about the people's desire for the calf image, which is manufactured, worshipped, and destroyed in ways akin to cultic images in Mesopotamia. Further, Exodus 32:1 – 6 clearly presents the calf image as the substitute for both Moses and YHWH, leading one to the conclusion that Moses had previously been considered as being on par with a divine cultic image of YHWH. The comparison between Moses and YHWH is also found in our passage, where Moses descends the mountain as the sole manifestation of YHWH for the people. This comparison is driven by the description of Moses' face as "horned" (קרן). Although many believe that the phenomenon should be interpreted as light shining from Moses' face in order to emphasize the conceptual parallels between Moses' face and YHWH's in Exodus 33, the linguistic evidence supports the conclusion that Moses' face was, in fact, "horned." Horns were a common characteristic of divinity in the ancient Near East. Such a description of Moses, in the context of Exodus 32 – 34, makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that Moses had assumed the role which the people already believed he had.

As with Genesis 1:26 – 27, there is a long and varied tradition of scholarship on Exodus 32 – 34. As a consequence, many of our conclusions about the image of Moses can be found in earlier scholarship. Nevertheless this venture was deemed worthwhile given our new understanding of representation in the ancient world. This treatment also sheds light on the possibility that such an understanding of the function of Moses might fit well into an exilic theology of divine presence. It was pointed out that the literary context of the passages that find Moses in such a position mirrors the historical context that influenced passages like Genesis 1. The Babylonian Exile posed a unique problem regarding divine presence: How can YHWH be present with his people without a cultic representation? As we have seen, many exilic and post-exilic polemics take aim at the belief that an inanimate, human-crafted, object could ever become an extension of deity. Nevertheless, the very presence of the polemics and the intimate knowledge that they exhibit demonstrate the attractive nature of the Mesopotamian cultic conceptualizations. Although the Priestly divine כבוד went a long way toward making YHWH immanent, it lacked the concrete nature that a cultic image would have provided. In the literary context of Exodus 32 – 34, the people find

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themselves in a perilous situation without a divine representation of YHWH. The immediate solution to this problem is to elevate Moses to divine status. Through Moses then and not the calf-image, YHWH's presence is extended and manifested to the people of Israel.

The distinct possibility that Exodus 34:29 – 35 (and, more generally, Ex 32 – 34) was intentionally woven into the surrounding Priestly context (chaps. 25 – 31 and 35 – 40) by a Priestly redactor bolsters this conclusion. Evidence for a Priestly redaction of the book is seen not only at the beginning and end of the book, but also at almost every major break. More broadly, there is evidence that Exodus 32 – 34 has been brought into the larger Priestly tabernacle narrative, 25 – 31, 35 – 40 in order to complete the set pattern of creation (25 – 31), fall (32 – 34), and restoration (35 – 40), mirroring the Priestly creation and flood stories. Finally, on a macrostructure level, it was demonstrated that the Priestly call-narrative (6 – 7) reflects the position and content of chapters 32 – 40. The two calls of Moses (3:1 – 6:1 and 6:2 – 7:7) correspond to the double covenant scheme (19 – 31 and 32 – 40). Exodus 32 – 34, therefore, corresponds to the second commission of Moses in 6:2 – 7:7. Both passages depict a situation where the covenant is in jeopardy, with the conflict being presented as YHWH versus a rival. Likewise, in both passages the resolution of the conflict is brought about by the elevation of Moses to divine status.

Finally, we examined Ezekiel's understanding of a renewed Israel in Ezekiel 36 – 37. That Ezekiel posited the possibility that humans could function in ways similar to the cultic images of Mesopotamia is, perhaps, less obvious than it is in the previous two passages under investigation. Unlike Genesis 1:26 – 27, Ezekiel never uses terminology otherwise associated with cultic images to refer to humans. Likewise, in contrast to Exodus 34:29 – 35, Ezekiel does not describe any particular human in terms otherwise reserved for divinity. Nevertheless, Ezekiel appears familiar with the concept. The prophet made use of the analogy in both his description of idolatrous Israel and Israel's future restoration. This is clear in passages like Ezekiel 16:10 – 19, where Israel is accused of usurping the role of YHWH and erroneously treating their images in the same manner that YHWH has appropriately treated Israel. Further, Ezekiel characterizes those who worship idols as being like them. Just as the idols of Mesopotamia are only dead, inanimate wood and stone, so those who worship them are incapable of hearing and seeing and, like the idol, are without breath. Both the idol and the idolator, therefore, should expect the same treatment: they will be exiled and destroyed. Given Ezekiel's fondness for the notion of reversal, it is no surprise that the description of Israel's restoration and return should again take up the human-cultic image analogy. Ezekiel 36 – 37 describes Israel like the cultic images of a defeated nation. They are washed (36:25 – 27), repaired (37:1 – 14), and their idolatrous heart is replaced by YHWH's own רוח (36:25 – 27; 37:8).

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Certainly others have mentioned the presence of this analogy in the book of Ezekiel. What has escaped notice, however, is the possibility that more is involved here than simple analogy. The destruction of the temple and the Babylonian exile were the driving forces behind the book's composition and message. Much like the Priestly theologians, therefore, Ezekiel needed to depict YHWH as present with his people without an accompanying temple or cultic image in the context of Mesopotamian cultic image tradition. Both, likewise, employ the notion of כבוד to emphasize YHWH's presence during this time. Although Ezekiel presented the divine כבוד in human form, it still remained too elusive and abstract to function like the cultic images in the surrounding culture. In both places, therefore, there was the need for a more tangible and concrete form of YHWH's presence. Humans appear to take up this position. There is little doubt that the concepts in the Priestly literature and Ezekiel are similar, yet dependence is difficult to ascertain and, indeed, there are significant differences.

The function of the divine רוח to transform Israel into YHWH's cultic image is an important facet in this argument. Just as the divine רוח was important in the Priestly description of humanity's creation as cultic images, so also does it take center stage in Ezekiel's (re)creation of YHWH's cultic images. In the detailed description of Israel's transformation from broken, dead, and scattered bones, Ezekiel characterizes the divine רוח as the agent of transformation. As we have seen, the infusion of YHWH's רוח into the bones of Israel does find a conceptual comparison to the divine presence thought to reside in cultic images. Further, the importance of this step becomes clearer when viewed in the light of Ezekiel's own transformation into YHWH's representative. Just as YHWH must open the mouth and ears of Ezekiel so that he may hear the divine message and speak it accordingly, so also YHWH's presence in Israel enables them to see, hear, obey, and, thus, live.

These three passages were chosen not only for their shared use of the analogy between humans and God but also due to the possibility of a Mesopotamian influence on the passages. The Babylonian exile played an important role in the final development of both the Priestly material and Ezekiel. The crisis of 587 BCE, the destruction of the primary location of YHWH's presence, would have naturally raised the question about YHWH's continued presence with his people. This question was not considered in a vacuum, but was being raised in the midst of a culture that placed a lot of emphasis on the role of cultic images as the means of extending and manifesting divine presence. Some Israelite authors of this time period attacked and parodied these beliefs in an attempt to demonstrate YHWH's supreme power. Others, however, made positive use of such conceptualizations to provide proof of YHWH's continued presence while maintaining the main critique of the Israelite polemic that YHWH cannot be made present by a cultic image. In the absence of the temple, and without any

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type of cultic symbol, YHWH's presence could be manifested through living humans.

5.2 The Concept in Later Judaism

An interesting development occurs in some Second Temple and Hellenistic literature, where certain humans appear to receive worship. The most obvious examples are found in literature dated between the third century BCE and the fourth century CE.[1] Fletcher-Louis has commented on several of these passages, noting, for example, how the Hymn to Simeon, in Sirach 50, might move in this direction. Simon appears at the climax of Sirach's praise of Israel's heroes (chaps. 44 – 49) and is described as "the glory of his people."[2] As the high priest,[3] he wears the garments of glory (50:11) and is directly identified with Ezekiel's כבוד יהוה (50:7). Further, according to Fletcher-Louis, the prostration of the people in v. 21, while primarily a response to the priestly blessing and the utterance of the divine name, may also be construed as given to Simeon since "he glorified himself with the name of the Lord" (50:20).

More obvious, however, is the "Son of Man" in the Similitudes of Enoch. In at least two passages this figure appears to receive worship. Thus, 48:5 states that the entire earth will "fall down and worship before him." This is given more detail in 62:6 – 9, which states that "the kings," "the mighty," "all who possess the earth," "the exalted," and "those who rule the earth" will "bless," "glorify," "extol," "fall on their faces," "worship," and "set their hope upon the Son of Man."[4] Likewise, the *Life of Adam and Eve* attributes the fall of Satan to his

1 C. Fletcher-Louis notes and comments on several of these passages in his 1999 essay, "The Worship of Divine Humanity as God's Image and the Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism* (ed. C. Newman et al.; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 112 – 128; cf. *idem*, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (WUNT 2/94; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1997), 120 – 25, 179 – 80.

2 As others have noted, there is an Adamic parallel here with the description of Simeon as "the glory of his people" and, in the previous verse, where the "beauteous glory of Adam" is "above every living thing" (49:16).

3 Likewise, Fletcher-Louis suggests that the worship of the high priest might also stand behind the description of Alexander the Great bowing before the priest outside Jerusalem (Jos. *Ant.* 11:331 – 5; cf. Scholion to *Megillath Ta'anith* 21 Tislev; *b. Yoma* 69a) and Hecataeus of Abdera's account of the Jewish constitution, where he states that the people would prostrate themselves before the Jewish high priest in their cultic assemblies (Diodorus, *Bibliotheca Historica* XL, 3.3 – 8).

4 Translation in R. H. Charles et al. (eds.), *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (2 vols; Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 2:216. On the possible influence of the Enochic Son of Man on the interpretation of Jesus as God, see, e. g., M. Barker, *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

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refusal to worship Adam.[5] In lines 13 – 14, Satan describes the situation that led to his mistake:

> When God blew into you the breath of life and your countenance and likeness were made in the image of God, Michael brought you and made (us) worship you in the sight of God; and the Lord God said: Behold Adam! I have made you in our image and likeness. And Michael went out and called all the angels saying: "Worship the image of the Lord God, as the Lord God has instructed."[6]

Finally, Ezekiel the Tragedian describes Moses' rise from a simple herdsman to divine ruler in the Exogage (lines 68 – 81).[7] Having ascended Sinai, Moses sees a great throne. Its occupant abandons the throne for Moses and hands over both scepter and crown. The stars, then, fall at Moses' feet as he gazes upon the whole earth.

Such concepts also go a long way in explaining the Christian conceptualization of a divine Jesus in the New Testament, since Jesus is often characterized as the high priest, second Adam, second Moses, and Son of Man. Further, according to these authors, Jesus is the physical manifestation of God on earth and is often described in ways comparable to cultic images in other cults. Thus, Paul described Jesus as "the image (εἰκών) of the invisible God" (Col 1:15; cf. 2 Cor 4:4) and the author of Hebrews states that Jesus is "the radiance of the glory" and "the impress/image of the being" (χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως) of God (Heb 1:3). This identification of Jesus as God, then, brought about the characterization of Christians as the image of Jesus. Much like Ezekiel, Paul argues that creation itself is not enough for people to claim this role. Instead, a divine transformation is necessary: "Those [God] foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image (εἰκών) of his son…"(Rom 8:29; cf. 1 Cor 15:49; Col 3:10, etc.). Also, like Ezekiel, Paul's characterization of Christians as the divine image implies more than mere function but includes the actual indwelling of the divine presence. Thus, he asks those tempted to commit sexual sins, "[d]o you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you" (1 Cor 6:19).

This study has demonstrated that the precedents of such conceptualizations do not originate in the Second Temple period. Instead, the idea of a human substituting for divinity is already found in biblical texts from the exilic period. Such a conceptualization of humanity had numerous advantages for an exilic

5 For a more detailed discussion of this passage, in this light, see D. Steenburg, "The Worship of Adam and Christ As the Image of God," *JSNT* 39 (1990), 95 – 109; C. Patton, "Adam as the Image of God: An Exploration of the Fall of Satan in the *Life of Adam and Eve*," *SBLSP* 33 (1994), 294 – 300; Fletcher-Louis, "Divine Humanity," 112 – 128.

6 Translation in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983 – 85), 2:262.

7 For text and translation, see H. Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1983), 54, 55.

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and post-exilic community: it allowed Israel's god to manifest his presence apart from any cultic appurtenance, while maintaining the biblical prohibition against making and worshipping human-made idols. Further, such a conceptualization nowhere violates the monotheism of the later biblical authors. These humans are not, in and of themselves, divine. Instead, they provide Israel's god with a means of extending *his* divine presence. For this reason the description is consistently achieved by means of a cultic-image analogy, where the divine image is not understood as something distinct from the represented god but actually extended *the* presence of that god.

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Freedman, D. N., editor. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
ANEP	Pritchard, J. B., editor. *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton, 1954
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ARAB	Luckenbill, D. D., *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*. 2 vols. Chicago, 1926 – 27
AS	Assyriological Studies
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	Oppenheim, A. L., et al., editors. *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956–
CANE	Sasson, J. M., et al., editors. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. 4 vols. New York: Scribner, 1995
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CD	Barth, K. *Church Dogmatics*. 5 vols. Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, Translated by G. Thomson. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936 – 77
CMHE	Cross, F. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1997

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DDD	Toorn, K. van der., et al., editors. *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. 2nd ed. Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
ETL	*Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses*
EvT	*Evangelische Theologie*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FB	Forschung zur Bibel
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GGG	Keel, O. and C. Uehlinger. *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel.* Translated by T. H. Trapp. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998
GKC	Kautzsch, E., editor. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar.* Translated by A. E. Cowley. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910
HALOT	Koehler, L., and W. Baumgartner. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2001
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IB	Buttrick, G. A., et al., editors. *Interpreter's Bible.* 12 vols. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1951 – 57
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
Int	*Interpretation*
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* of Columbia University
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JM	Joüon, P. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew.* Translated and Revised by T. Muraoka. 2 vols. Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JOTT	*Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics*
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JRS	*Journal of Ritual Studies*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LAS	Parpola, S. *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*. 2 vols. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007
MDOG	*Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft*
MIOF	*Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*

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NAC	New American Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDOTTE	VanGemeren, W. A., et al., editors. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
Or	*Orientalia*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OtSt	*Oudtestamentische Studiën*
PRSt	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
RB	*Revue biblique*
RIME	The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods
RLA	Ebeling, E., et al., editors. *Reallexikon der Assyriolgie*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928–
SANE	*Source from the Ancient Near East*
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSP	*Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
ScEs	*Science et esprit*
SEL	*Studi epigrafici e linguistici*
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SIDA	Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
STT	Sultantepe Tablets
TB	Theologische Bücherei: Neudrucke und Berichte aus dem 20. Jahrhundert
TDOT	Botterweck, G. J., and H. Ringgren, editors. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–
ThZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
TLOT	Jenni E., and C. Westermann, editors. *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated by M. E. Biddle. 3 vols. Peabody, MA, 1997. Translation of *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*. 2 vols. Munich, 1971–76
TWAT	Botterweck, G. J., and H. Ringgren, editors. *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973–
TynB	*Tyndale Bulletin*
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
VAB	Vorderasiatische Bibliothek
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WOC	Waltke, B. K., and M. O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990

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WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

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Divine Substitution is an investigation of ancient conceptualizations of divine presence. Specifically, Stephen L. Herring investigates the possibility that the ancient Mesopotamian conceptualization of cultic and royal statues, thought to actually manifest the presence of gods and kings, can likewise be found in ancient Israel. Though the biblical reflection of »foreign« cultic practices is often negative, Herring demonstrates that this opinion is not universally held: At least three biblical texts portray the conceptualization that material images could manifest the divine presence in positive terms. Yet, these positive attestations were limited to a certain type of material image – humans.

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